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Bidzyan, Dzhema R.

Branch of the Voronezh Institute of Economics and Law in Stary Oskol, Stary Oskol, Russian Federation

Sheveleva, Svetlana V.

South-West State University, Kursk, Russian Federation

The History of Liability for Sexual Services in Russia in the 18th – Early 20th Century: Materials from the State Archive of the Kursk Region

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of regional aspects of fighting prostitution in the 18th – early 20th century drawing on materials of the State Archive of the Kursk Region. The time period has been chosen for ambivalence of legislator regulating the market of sex services (swinging from prohibitions to permission), as the discussion of prostitution legalization has rekindled following certain legislative changes. In addition, there is an increase in scientific interest in local history in certain areas. The basis for the study is several studies of regional practices of regulation of the sexual services market. The authors' approach makes it possible to reconstruct the full picture of the developments in state policy concerning sex industry in the specified historical period. This case-study the Kursk region determines the nature of the policy and analyzes the application of norms regulating the industry (in the periods of legislative tolerance to prostitution) or suppressing it (in the periods of prohibition). The study has drawn a picture of state policy implementation in the sphere of sexual services at its regional level. Drawing on materials from the State Archive of the Kursk Region reflecting application of regulations on prostitution in the Kursk gubernia, the authors have analyzed legislator's and law enforcement officer's attitude to prostitution. The Kursk gubernia have been chosen for this study as it was a typical region of the European part of Russia during said period, and as there is practically no scientific research on this issue. Main sources on the application of law introducing liability for sexual services are materials from the State Archive of the Kursk Region. The study has used methods of generalization, systematization, analysis, chronological method, comparative law research, etc. Its novelty is determined by introduction of new materials into scientific use and also by its complex approach. It is concluded that, throughout their historical development, norms in the field of sexual services expressed the attitude of the authorities to sexual services availability: from tolerance via administrative regulation to administrative and/or criminal prohibition. During the periods of legislative prohibition, positive dynamics in fighting prostitution can be observed, though a number of socio-political changes hindered effective regulation of sex industry.

Keywords

Historical sources, crime, prostitution, sexual service.

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About the authors

Sheveleva Svetlana Viktorovna, PhD in Law, Professor, Southwest State University, faculty of law, dean, Kursk, Russian Federation, +7-4712-22-25-46, decan46@yandex.ru

ORCID: 0000-0002-8358-8924

Gemma Robertovna Bidzyan, Branch of the Voronezh Institute of Economics and Law in Stary Oskol, department of jurisprudence, senior lecturer, Stary Oskol, Russian Federation, +7-952-427-67-94, jemmarobertovna@yandex.ru

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