Pimps, Prostitutes and Policewomen: The Polish Women Police and the International Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children between the World Wars

DAVID PETRUCCELLI

Abstract

Women entered police service between the wars in much of the world as a result of agitation by the international women's movement and the League of Nations. Nearly everywhere a gendered division of police work emerged, with female police primarily responsible for social welfare tasks and their male colleagues handling investigations and arrests. Poland represented a notable exception. Tapping into both international and national concerns, Polish policewomen laid claim to extensive powers by invoking the grave threat of the traffic in women. This focus on trafficking had a paradoxical effect, expanding the possibilities for female policing even as it justified a range of restrictive measures against prostitutes and poor female emigrants.

Department of History, Yale University, 320 York Street, P.O. Box 208324, New Haven, CT 06520–8324, USA; david.petruccelli@yale.edu

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In the spring of 1928 Warsaw's pimps gathered at a luxurious villa in the wealthy suburb of Józefów. They had assembled at the behest of Abraham Marczyk, a Warsaw Jew by origin who now ran three bustling brothels in Buenos Aires and was looking for prostitutes to dispatch to Argentina. Two of his agents had come to Warsaw a few months earlier only to be arrested by the Women's Brigade, a unit of policewomen set up to uncover and arrest the pimps and traffickers operating in the city. Marczyk then took matters into his own hands, travelling to Warsaw with 80,000 US dollars and convening a meeting of the city's various pimps. But the Women's Brigade had caught wind of the meeting and ensured that they had an informant present. With the details gleaned from their informant, the policewomen sprang into action, arresting Marczyk and several accomplices. After posting bail, the suspects fled the country.[1] From the safety of Paris, Marczyk reportedly stated that he would not return to Warsaw as long as 'those females' still worked there.[2] Dubbed by the press as the 'king of the white slave traders', Marczyk was but one of a series of high-profile pimps whose cases brought international and national renown to Poland's policewomen in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[3]

Poland was not the first country to introduce women into policing, nor could it claim the largest contingent of policewomen, but those that it had possessed a range of powers of investigation and arrest unmatched by foreign counterparts during the interwar period. This fact was apparent to contemporary observers. One study of the international policewoman movement from 1925, the year of the Polish Women Police's founding, concluded that 'Poland has recently gone far ahead in the question of women police'.[4] Unlike western European and American policewomen, however, the Polish Women Police have received relatively little scholarly attention. The most comprehensive work on the subject remains an account written after the Second World War by Poland's leading interwar policewoman, Stanisława Paleolog, while a few more recent articles in Polish have further outlined their development.[5] These works fail, however, to account for the distinct character of the Polish Women Police.

[1] Reconstructed from Stanisława Paleolog, *The Women Police of Poland, 1925–1939* (London: Association for Moral & Social Hygiene, 1957), 83–6; 'La police feminine dans la lutte contre la traite des femmes', Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland, Ministerstwo Opieki Społecznej 182, 68–70; 'Sprawozdanie z działalności VI Brygady S.O.Urzędu Śledczego m.st.Warszawy w zakresie walki z handlem żywym towarem, nadzoru nad nierządem, sutenerstwem, handlu narkotykami i pornografją', 25 Aug. 1928, AAN MOS 176, 2–4; 'Streszczenie sprawy Marczyka Abrama, Brudesza Chaima i innych, oskarżonych o handel żywym towarem', AAN MOS 200, 13–4; 'Sprawozdanie sprawy no. 3/tjn. tyczące się braci Moszka i Srula-Lejora Aszerów podejrzanych o handel żywym towarem', AAN MOS 200, 16–7; Halina Siemieńska, *Stan Walki z Nierządem* (Warsaw: Nakładem Polskiego Komitetu Walki z Handlem Kobietami i Dziećmi, 1933), 15–6; Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery, 1870–1939* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 292–4.

[2] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 86.

[3] 'Policja kobieca wyśledziła króla żywym towarem', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 8 July 1928, 5.

[4] Chloe Owings, *Women Police: A Study of the Development and Status of the Women Police Movement* (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, 1925), 84.

[5] Paleolog, *Women Police*; Piotr Gołdyn, 'Od misji dworcowych do policji kobiecej', in Ryszard Łaszewski and Sprengel Bolesław, eds., *Od straży obywatelskich do policji. Służby porządkowe na ziemiach polskich w XX wieku*, (Włowławek: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna we Włocławku, 2007), 89–95; Andrzej Misiuk, 'Policja Kobieca w II Rzeczyspospolitej na tle międzynarodowym',

Unlike in other European states, the fight against sex trafficking, known in official circles as the traffic in women and children and popularly as white slavery, provided the immediate justification for the founding and expansive powers of female police in Poland. By fitting their work within both national and international narratives of white slavery, Polish policewomen laid claim to a wide range of powers even as foreign counterparts saw their tasks reduced to mostly social welfare roles. Ultimately, this reliance on the traffic in women as a foundational myth had ambiguous effects. While it empowered Poland's policewomen to challenge the gender norms then common in policing internationally, a monolithic concept of trafficking that encompassed coerced as well as voluntary prostitution, and even emigration, stripped from many of the purported victims of the traffic the power to choose their own fate.

The international policewoman movement

In 1931 a report prepared by the League of Nations highlighted the remarkable progress in integrating women into policing that had been made internationally since the end of the First World War. The report, which examined seven countries in detail, noted the prevalence of a division of police work along gender lines. In five of the seven countries, policewomen found their activities confined to 'preventive' tasks, in the terminology of the day, primarily welfare roles targeting women and children considered in 'moral danger', as opposed to 'repressive' duties of investigation and arrest left to their male counterparts. Only in the United States and Poland was there 'a tendency towards relative assimilation as regards the duties of men and women police, so that the work of women police is becoming repressive rather than preventive'. The Polish case, in particular, stood out. The report noted that 'The detection of brothels and prosecution of traffickers and souteneurs [pimps] are not among the duties of women police except in Poland, where women do a great deal in this direction. The work often requires physical strength and invariably calls for courage and considerable skill; it is generally left to men.'[6] However, the memorandum offered no explanations for this exceptional case. In order to understand the particular characteristics of the Polish female police, it is important first to consider the broader international campaign to incorporate women into policing.

Calls to integrate women into policing originated in the movement to abolish the state regulation of prostitution, which spread from Britain to much of the globe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Abolitionists decried the mandatory registration and invasive medical inspection of prostitutes then prevalent in Europe. They took particular aim at what they considered the venal 'morals police', who enforced the regulation system, arguing that policewomen would elicit more trust from prostitutes and were less likely to be corrupt or abusive than male officers. More

Przegląd Policyjny, 2, 4 (Dec. 1992), 92–102; Bolesław Sprengel, 'Stanisława Paleolog [1892–1968] – organizatorka polskiej policji kobiecej', *Przegląd Policyjny*, 10, 3–4 (Dec. 2000), 165–8.

[6] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, 'Employment of Women Police', 25 Mar. 1931 (League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 509), 9.

broadly, policewomen were to be part of a project of moral societal transformation. For abolitionists prostitution was the most heinous manifestation of the moral double standard by which society tolerated male sexual activity while condemning female promiscuity. Their solution was to replace this double standard with a single one, the traditionally female virtue of chastity. The introduction of women into policing offered abolitionists a way to transform the police into a moralising rather than an immoral institution, as policewomen would work to reform rather than control prostitutes and to punish rather than tolerate the pimps and clients who exploited them. By linking the exploitation of prostitutes to the plight of women more broadly, abolitionism played an important role in the internationalising women's movement. From the 1880s onwards, the issue of 'white slavery' was key to the spread of this movement.[7]

The importance of white slavery to the abolitionist cause exposed divisions within the movement. Popular fears about the kidnapping and sexual enslavement of young women mobilised popular support for the movement, but the dominant narrative of white slavery as the corruption of innocent girls glossed over the grim realities of a situation in which poverty and a lack of opportunities at home tended to drive young women into prostitution long before they were spirited to brothels overseas.[8] In theory abolitionists held out a radical vision for social reform based on the eradication of deep-seated gender inequalities around sexuality. In practice, by pursuing a moralistic programme promoting abstinence for women as well as men, and by casting the mostly working class prostitutes as passive victims and the predominantly middle class abolitionists as their saviours, they tended to reinforce gender and class divisions.[9] Indeed, it was one of the contradictions of the movement that abolitionists often drew on the language of gender difference, confidently asserting the moral superiority of women, to push their cause. In this way, abolitionists invoked the maternalist language then dominant in the women's movement.

Maternalist groups pushed for an expansion of women's public roles based on their 'motherly' capacities for caring and nurturing. To be sure, maternalist politics drew on distinctly bourgeois visions of womanhood that condescended to the

[7] On abolitionism, see especially Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 214–58; Mary Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy, 1860–1915*, 2nd edn (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 39–64; Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 154–7; Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). On abolitionism and policewomen, see especially R. M. Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps: The British Voluntary Women Police, 1914–1940* (Westport, Conn.; London: Preager, 1999), 4–6; Dirk Götting, *Das Aufbegehren der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung gegen die Sittenpolizei des Kaiserreichs und der erste Versuch weiblicher Polizeiarbeit in Deutschland (1875–1914): Frauen im Polizeidienst zwischen 'Rettungsarbeit' und 'Sittenschnüffelei'* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2010); Ursula D. Nienhaus, *'Nicht für eine Führungsposition geeignet—': Josephine Erkens und die Anfänge weiblicher Polizei in Deutschland 1923–1933* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1999), 14–7.

[8] There is an extensive literature stressing the mythologising of the white slavery scare. For a good summary of the scholarship on the myths and realities of white slavery, as well as comparisons to contemporary discussions of sex trafficking, see Jo Doezema, 'Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women', *Gender Issues*, 18, 1 (Dec.1999), 23–50.

[9] Walkowitz, *Prostitution*.

poor. Nonetheless, these arguments helped open the door for female participation in the public sphere, propelled political change such as the expansion of state social welfare schemes in western Europe and represented a common ground for the internationalising women's movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[10] Maternalist arguments were common among advocates of the policewoman movement, stressing the distinct, 'motherly' roles that women could play in policing, particularly in welfare functions involving women and children. Such 'preventive' policing could complement rather than challenge male 'repressive' police functions of investigation and arrest. Maternalism may have moderated the vision for social change endorsed by more radical segments of the abolitionist movement, which envisioned female police operating on equal footing with male colleagues, but it provided an argument for the integration of women into police forces that could appeal to a range of men as well as women.

Though women served in limited capacities in a handful of countries before and during the First World War, it was only in the interwar period that women entered policing on a wide scale, largely through the activism of the League of Nations.[11] The basis for the League's promotion of the issue was its campaign against the international sex traffic. The League's Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children consistently pursued an abolitionist agenda as the solution to the traffic in prostitutes. While its principal focus remained the fight against the state regulation of prostitution, the committee interpreted its mandate broadly, using the rhetorical power of this cause to push for the improvement of conditions for women.[12] One important aspect of this work was its promotion of female policing. Already at its second session in March 1923, the committee recommended that 'women as well as men should be employed

[10] Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920', *The American Historical Review*, 95, 4 (Oct. 1990), 1076–108; Marian van der Klein, ed., *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 83–9.

[11] On policewomen before the war, see Kerry Segrave, *Policewomen: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1995), 5–43; Götting, *Aufbegehren*; Jessica Pliley, 'The Petticoat Inspectors: Women Boarding Inspectors and the Gendered Exercise of Federal Authority', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 12, 1 (Jan. 2013), 95–126.

[12] On the interwar fight against trafficking in the League, see especially Jean-Michel Chaumont, *Le mythe de la traite des Blanches: enquête sur la fabrication d'un fléau* (Paris: la Découverte, 2009); Stephen Legg, '"The Life of Individuals as well as of Nations": International Law and the League of Nations' Anti-Trafficking Governmentalities', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 25, 3 (Sept. 2012), 647–64; Stephanie Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking: The First International Movement to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Magaly Rodríguez García, 'The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women', *Special Issue of the International Review of Social History*, 57 (2012), 97–128; Daniel Gorman, 'Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 19, 2 (2008), 186–216; Paul Knepper, *International Crime in the 20th Century: The League of Nations Era, 1919–1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 86–113; Jessica R. Pliley, 'Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' *Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children*, 1919–1936', *Journal of Women's History*, 22, 4 (2010), 90–113.

among the police dealing with prostitution'.[13] For nearly a decade, the committee collected data on the use of women in policing, held regular discussions on the nature of female police work and issued recommendations to the League's General Assembly. The committee's vision for female policing aligned with the more radical aspects of the abolitionist movement, favouring investing policewomen with broad powers in order to 'decrease the evils of the traffic in women'.[14]

By contrast, when the issue came before the Assembly, where representatives of all of the states in the League gathered, discussion tended towards more conservative, maternalist pronouncements. The British delegate Edith Lyttelton set the tone when the issue first came before the Assembly in 1923, stressing that women's desire to serve on police forces was not 'mere morbid feminism on the part of women, or simply a kind of vanity ... a desire to do the same things as men; it is because they know women can exercise a very great preventive influence' as motherly figures.[15] The Assembly adopted a resolution urging states to appoint policewomen. Six years later it passed a second resolution calling attention 'to the great importance of the employment of women police as a preventive measure'.[16]

The League's activism ensured the cause's rapid spread. Whereas only a few states had women in police service before 1918, a 1927 survey by the League counted twenty such states. In the 1930s policewomen entered service in Uruguay, China and India.[17] Even France, which had vociferously opposed the idea in a 1927 report to the League, appointed female 'police assistants' in some cities beginning in 1932.[18] While clearly propelled by the growing weight of world opinion in favour of some form female policing, the precise nature of this work varied by national context. In the United States, policewomen situated themselves within a programme for municipal police reform that arose out of criticisms of urban political machines. Advocates of policewomen argued that 'preventive policing' incorporating certain feminine qualities could give a new basis for American policing freed from corrupt city politics. By the 1930s the preventive police model faltered with the emergence of an alternative 'crime control' model, which stressed male professionalism rather than feminine traits, and which relegated policewomen to secondary, welfare roles.[19] In Britain, by contrast, voluntary women's police patrols during the First World War

[13] League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 509, 1–2.

[14] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, 'The Employment of Women in the Police', 1 Aug. 1927 (League of Nations Document C.374.M.144.1927.IV./C.T.F.E.331), 2.

[15] League of Nations, *Official Journal. Special Supplement No. 13. Records of the Fourth Assembly, Plenary Meetings, Text of the Debates* (Geneva: 1923), 52.

[16] League of Nations Document, C.T.F.E. 509, 1–2.

[17] Segrave, *Policewomen*, 103; League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, 'Employment of Women Police', 22 Mar. 1932 (League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 540), 10–1.

[18] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, 'The Employment of Women in the Police', 9 Dec. 1927 (League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 331(1)), 7; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 1 July 1935, Société des Nations 1766, 165–66, Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, France.

[19] Janis Appier, 'Preventive Justice: The Campaign for Women Police, 1910–1940', *Women & Criminal Justice*, 4, 1 (1993), 3–36.

drew on traditions of abolitionism and the suffrage movement. At the conclusion of the war, the Home Office marginalised the more radical voices within the movement while integrating a moderate version of female policing into London's Metropolitan Police.[20]

In Germany, political leaders and police administrators saw in policewomen an opportunity to symbolically reject the masculine and authoritarian traditions of the German Empire.[21] The country's top policewoman, Josephine Erkens, launched an ambitious programme in Hamburg in the late 1920s, known popularly as the 'Hamburg system', under which policewomen had complete responsibility for investigating a range of sexual offences. This represented a direct challenge to the male dominance of investigations, and a brutal press campaign instigated by a group of police administrators ended the experiment and forced Erkens out of police service.[22] Erkens's departure did not mark the end of interwar German female policing, which, after a period of stagnation, underwent an unprecedented expansion in 1937.[23] However, it did signal the end of the abolitionist-inspired reform vision in which German policewomen would challenge the male monopoly over investigations and arrests.

While the details varied by location, the maternalist aspiration to develop a gendered division of police work between 'preventive' tasks relegated mostly to policewomen and 'repressive' ones that were exclusively masculine had triumphed nearly everywhere by the 1930s. By this point the economic crisis and rising political tensions took the steam out of the international policewoman movement. The last serious consideration of the issue at League of Nations took place in 1933.[24] The reasons for the maternalist turn were broadly similar everywhere. The conservative vision of integrating women into policing without challenging the male monopoly over investigations and arrests could mobilise a broad coalition, including many abolitionists and policewomen acting out of a mixture of principle and pragmatism, as well as male political leaders and police officials looking to appease public opinion

[20] John Carrier, *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1988); Louise A. Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), especially 21–3; Douglas, *Feminist Freikorps*; Philippa Levine, '"Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I', *The Journal of Modern History*, 66, 1 (Mar. 1994), 34–78.

[21] Bettina Blum, 'Weibliche Polizei – soziale Polizei? Weibliche (Jugend)Polizei zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur 1927–1952', in Wolfgang Schulte, ed., *Die Polizei im NS-Staat. Beiträge eines internationalen Symposiums an der Deutschen Hochschule der Polizei in Münster* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2009), 513–4.

[22] Erika S. Fairchild, 'Women Police in Weimar: Professionalism, Politics, and Innovation in Police Organizations', *Law & Society Review*, 21, 3 (1987), 375–402; Nienhaus, *Erkens*; Ursula Nienhaus, 'Einsatz für die "Sittlichkeit": Die Anfänge der weiblichen Polizei im Wilhelminischen Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik', in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *'Sicherheit' und 'Wohlfahrt': Polizei, Gesellschaft und Herrschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 243–66.

[23] Ursula Nienhaus, 'Himmlers Willigie Komplizinnen: Weibliche Polizei im Nationalsozialismus (1937–1945)', in Katja Limbächer, Maike Merten and Bettina Pfefferle, eds., *Das Mädchenskonzentrationslager Uckermark* (Münster: Unrast, 2000), 76–94.

[24] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, 'Employment of Women in the Police, Report by the Secretary', Feb. 1933 (League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 579).

without conceding too many powers. That Poland differed was largely a function of the resurgence of public anxieties about the country's role in one of abolitionists' long-standing causes, white slavery, an issue that had lost much of its rhetorical power in the domestic agendas of most Western European states after the First World War.[25]

Poland's Women Police and the fight against the traffic in women

'The menace of the Polish vice traffic to the morals of the whole world has become so grave that pressure is being applied by many countries for its extermination', proclaimed the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* in late 1931. Leading the charge against the 'great white slave mart of Central Europe' was 'Poland's Joan of Arc', the country's top policewoman, Stanisława Paleolog.[26] The article then reprinted a description of Paleolog's work that had appeared in the London newspaper the *Daily Express*. The article captured both the high international regard for Poland's female police and the centrality of the traffic in women to this force's work. Indeed, it was a sense of international obligation to suppress the traffic that had first impelled the Polish National Committee for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children to urge the Polish government to introduce female police to deal with prostitution and trafficking in 1924. In its appeal, the committee, founded a year earlier, cited resolutions by the League of Nations and an international congress on the vice trade.[27] The Polish government launched a training programme completed by twenty-nine policewomen in 1925, of whom twenty-four entered service in Warsaw and five in Łódź.[28]

The white slave trade was a long-standing concern in the Polish lands, linked in the popular imagination to the region's large Jewish population. Jews do seem to have made up a disproportionate share of traffickers in many countries before the First World War, but the anti-Semitic press in Europe greatly exaggerated their role in the trade while glossing over the high proportion of Jewish prostitutes among the trafficked. By the end of the nineteenth century white slavery came to be popularly understood across Europe as a trade monopolised by Jews and strongly associated with Eastern Europe.[29] This image persisted in the interwar era. One English book,

[25] One influential interwar book popularising the work of the League against the traffic in women concluded that this was a problem of little significance in most of western and central Europe or the United States, unlike in eastern Europe. See H. Wilson Harris, *Human Merchandise: A Study of the International Traffic in Women* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1928).

[26] 'Poland's "Joan of Arc" Appears', *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 Dec. 1931, 8, available at http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Page/singfreepressb19311219–1.1.8.aspx (last visited 12 July 2014).

[27] Polski Komitet Walki z Handlem Kobietami i Dziećmi, 20 Nov. 1924, AAN MOS 236, 1–5.

[28] [Stanisława Paleolog], 'Służba kobiet w Policji Państwowej', AAN Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej 1881, 182.

[29] For perceptions and realities of Jewish involvement in the traffic, see Bristow, *Prostitution*; Marion Kaplan, 'Prostitution, Morality Crusades and Feminism: Jewish Feminists and the Campaign against White Slavery', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5, 6 (1982), 619–27; Lloyd P. Gartner, 'Anglo-Jewry and the Jewish International Traffic in Prostitution, 1885–1914', *AJS Review*, 7/8 (1982/1983), 129–78;

summarising the findings of a League of Nations study from 1927, explained that Poland was 'one of the chief European centres of the traffic'.[30] The French journalist Albert Londres agreed that, 'The veritable White Slave Traffic, such as is conceived by the popular imagination, is carried on by the Polaks'.[31]

The traffic in women represented a significant problem for Poland's reputation, but one that fitted neatly into Polish national narratives. The Polish state had disappeared from the map of Europe in 1795, partitioned between Russia, Prussia and the Habsburg Monarchy, and only re-emerged in 1918 as these empires collapsed. During these years of partition, activists had sought to keep the national idea alive while debating the nature of the national community. By the turn of the century, prostitution came to play an important role in debates demarcating the nation in increasingly middle-class and moral terms, excluding groups such as Jews and lower-class women.[32] The white slave trade occupied a prominent place in these discussions, especially in the decades after a major trial in the Habsburg city of Lemberg (between the wars the Polish city of Lwów, since 1945 the Ukrainian city of L'viv) in 1892 crystallised Polish discussions of the problem as a tale of Polish victimisation by Jewish traffickers and the imperialist powers that forcibly divided the Polish state.[33] The future head of the Polish Women Police, Stanisława Paleolog, who was born in a village near Lemberg in the year of the trial, imbibed this discourse, later writing that 'prostitution was not a product of social relations within the country, but came from without, developing with the infiltration of foreign influences'. The partitioning powers had, she asserted, allowed trafficking and prostitution as part of a strategy aimed at the 'lowering of cultural and moral standards' of the nation.[34] For the woman who was to lead Poland's fight against trafficking, as for many Poles, the campaign against the vice trade represented a vital step in achieving independence, both from the historical burdens of partition and from unwanted foreign influences.

Anxieties over trafficking resurfaced after the First World War amidst a broad sense of moral and political crisis. After gaining independence in 1918, the new Polish republic launched an ambitious programme of reconstruction aimed at stitching together a long-divided polity and giving it the trappings of a modern European state. But aspirations fostered over more than a century of national agitation ran up against the grim realities facing the young state. The country suffered significant

Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 5–11; Nancy M. Wingfield, 'Destination: Alexandria, Buenos Aires, Constantinople; "White Slavers" in Late Imperial Austria', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20, 2 (May 2011), 291–311.

[30] Harris, *Human Merchandise*, 129.

[31] Albert Londres, *The Road to Buenos Ayres*, trans. Eric Sutton (London: Constable & Co., 1928), 117.

[32] On prewar Polish debates on prostitution, see Keely Stauter-Halsted, 'Moral Panic and the Prostitute in Partitioned Poland: Middle-Class Respectability in Defense of the Modern Nation', *Slavic Review*, 16, 3 (Fall 2009), 557–81; Keely Stauter-Halsted, 'The Physician and the Fallen Woman: Medicalizing Prostitution in the Polish Lands', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20, 2 (May 2011), 270–90.

[33] Keely Stauter-Halsted, '"A Generation of Monsters": Jews, Prostitution, and Racial Purity in the 1892 L'viv White Slavery Trial', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 38 (2006), 25–35.

[34] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 1, 4.

damage during the First World War, engaged in border wars with neighbouring states until 1921 and endured lasting social, political and economic divisions resulting from earlier partitions. Poland's overwhelmingly peasant population was mired in poverty, its economy suffered through persistent inflation and it was governed in the years after regaining independence by a series of short-lived and largely ineffectual governments. Many Poles interpreted political and economic instability as the expression of a deeper moral crisis.[35] In this climate the fight against the traffic in women served as a salve for the country's moral insecurities. Tapping into general European maternalist thinking, Polish policewomen could claim a unique capacity to respond to this issue.[36]

They also drew on a symbolism of female insurgency particular to the Polish context. During the nineteenth century, a distinct image of the Polish woman warrior emerged in national thought, drawing on real incidences of female participation in nineteenth century national uprisings, such as the famous fighter of 1830 Emilia Plater.[37] And Polish women participated, though seldom in combat roles, in the struggle over Poland's borders after the First World War. Stanisława Paleolog, for instance, joined an all-female Polish paramilitary organisation, the Legion of Women Volunteers (*Ochotnicza Legia Kobiet*, or OLK), when fighting broke out in 1918 between Ukrainian and Polish factions over the fate of the city formerly called Lemberg. She served as a courier and as a guard during the fighting in the city in 1918–1919 and then as adjutant to the head of the OLK in Warsaw during the Polish-Bolshevik war the following year. After the OLK was disbanded in 1921, Paleolog worked in the university clinic in Cracow.[38] In 1925, on the basis of her experience in the OLK, she was chosen to lead the newly formed female police force in Warsaw. Her martial background featured prominently in biographical pieces describing her.[39] A substantial number of the first group of twenty-nine policewomen had, like Paleolog, come from the OLK.[40] Paleolog later explained the founding of the Women Police as recognition of 'the part played by Polish women in the struggle for freedom during the years of Partition, and even more so during the First World War and the Polish-Bolshevik War when Polish women, weapon in hand, had fought side by side

[35] Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926–1935* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

[36] On women's activism on moral questions in interwar Poland, see Dobrochna Kałwa, *Kobieta aktywna w Polsce międzywojennej. Dylematy środowisk kobiecych*, (Krakow: Historia Iagellonica, 2001), 65–81.

[37] Halina Filipowicz, 'Othering the Kościuszko Uprising: Women as a Problem in Polish Insurgent Discourse', in Elwira M. Grossman, ed., *Studies in Language, Literature, and Cultural Mythology in Poland*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 55–83; Halina Filipowicz, 'The Daughters of Emilia Plater', in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forrester, eds., *Engendering Slavic Literatures*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 34–58; Brian Porter, 'Hetmanka and Mother: Representing the Virgin Mary in Modern Poland', *Contemporary European History*, 14, 2 (May 2005), 151–70.

[38] Sprengel, 'Paleolog', 165–6; Urszula Zofia Paleolog, 'Stanisława Dematraki Paleolog (właśc. Filipina Stanisława Paleolog). Zarys życia i działalności. Wspomnienia siostry z lat 1892–1968', 1–59, Rękopis 15548 II, Ossolineum, Wrocław, Poland.

[39] See for instance 'Komendantka Policji Kobiecej', *Kobieta Współczesna: Ilustrowany Tygodnik Społeczno-Literacki*, 2, 3 (15 Jan. 1928), 17; 'Aspirantka policji państwowej', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 7 Jan. 1928, 6.

[40] League of Nations Document C.T.F.E. 509, 18/19.

with Polish men for the freedom of their country'.[41] Their participation in the early struggles of the new Polish state and ability to situate themselves within a martial tradition distinguished the Polish policewomen from their Western counterparts, who primarily had backgrounds in social welfare, remained on the home front during the First World War and focused increasingly on preventive police roles.[42]

The Polish Women Police viewed their campaign against pimps and traffickers as part of a broader struggle for 'the moral rebirth of society'.[43] The shifting political atmosphere encouraged their efforts. In May 1926 the hero of the Polish-Bolshevik War Józef Piłsudski seized power and declared a *Sanacja* (cleansing) regime that promised moral regeneration. The following year a presidential order unified the disparate laws against pimping and trafficking. One of the first steps taken to overcome the various partition-era penal codes that remained in force in Poland until 1932, this measure signalled the importance of fighting the traffic.[44] Armed with this order and a broad mandate to root out immorality, the Polish Women Police launched an ambitious campaign against the traffickers operating on Polish soil. The centre of the fight was Warsaw, where Stanisława Paleolog's unit worked a string of high-profile cases against traffickers, pimps and procurers and carried out numerous raids on brothels, banned in Poland since 1922. The number of convictions for international trafficking that Poland reported to the League of Nations rose from one conviction in 1924 and none in 1925 to seventy-five in 1926 and twenty in 1927–8.[45] By 1932 the Women Police in Poland had reportedly sent 137 cases of trafficking in women and 602 cases of pimping to court.[46]

In 1928 the Polish National Committee argued that the dramatic increase in cases of pimping, procurement and trafficking justified a new training course for policewomen.[47] By this time the brigade in Warsaw had shrunk to thirteen policewomen. A second course held the following year trained thirty-seven women for service in Warsaw, Łódź, and new divisions of female police in Vilnius, L'viv, Gdynia and Lublin.[48] Whereas the first group of Polish policewomen had been selected by women's organisations, general rules governing recruitment now came into force. Candidates had to be in good physical condition, between twenty-one and thirty-five years of age, unmarried and have completed at least six years of school. Policewomen initially served alongside men and under male leadership, and they

[41] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 16–7.

[42] The Soviet experience, in which female soldiers integrated martial identities into ideas about womanhood, offers some parallels. See Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[43] 'Komendantka Policji Kobiecej', 17.

[44] Dariusz Makiłła, *Historia prawa w Polsce* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Naukowe PWN, 2008), 479–80, 494.

[45] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 96–7.

[46] 'La police feminine dans la lutte contre la traite des femmes', AAN MOS 182, 68, 71.

[47] Wiceprezes Polskiego Komitetu Walki z Handlem Kobietami i Dziećmi to Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej, AAN MOS 236, 13–4.

[48] *VIII Międzynarodowy Kongres Komitetów Walki z handlem kobietami i dziećmi. Warszawa 7–10 Października 1930. Sprawozdanie Polskiego Komitetu i Organizacyj Społecznych w Polsce* (Warsaw: Druk Piotra Laskauera, 1930), 77.

encountered hostility from colleagues resenting female interference in their sphere. But the success of the policewomen led to a gradual reduction in the number of male police in these units and, in Warsaw, to the complete elimination of men in the Women's Brigade.[49]

The policewomen's crusade against trafficking received substantial attention both at home and abroad. One of Poland's most popular daily newspapers, the Cracow-based *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, reported on the Polish policewomen at least thirty-seven times between 1925 and 1939.[50] Articles placed the Polish example in an international perspective, described the training and work of policewomen and hailed their major accomplishments, such as the case of the 'king of the white slave traders', Abraham Marczyk.[51] Foreign newspapers also praised Poland's policewomen, for example in the articles that ran in the *Daily Express* and *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*.[52] A 1927 novel, *Pani Balbina i s-ka*, featured a policewoman fighting the traffic, as did a film that appeared in 1929, which proved sufficiently popular to merit a remake ten years later.[53] The Eighth International Congress for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, held in Warsaw in 1930, presented Poland with an opportunity to show off the work of the Women Police, including statistics of traffickers and pimps apprehended.[54] Delegates from Poland stressed the importance of policewomen in the fight against traffic at various international conferences.[55]

The image emerging from these representations of the Women Police adhered to the narrative of Polish vigilance in the face of an external threat. In particular, accounts of the traffic stressed the influence of organisations of Jewish pimps based in Latin America, especially the shadowy Varsovia operating out of Buenos Aires. In 1928 the Polish ambassador in Buenos Aires succeeded in having the organisation change its name, which was seen as an insult to Polish honour, and after it adopted the moniker 'Zwi Migdal', he continued to press the Argentinian government to crack down

[49] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 22–6; League of Nations Document C.T.F.E.509, 18/19; Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej to Polski Komitet Walki z Handlem Kobietami i Dziećmi, 11 Dec. 1936, AAN MOS 237, 1.

[50] Based on a search of the terms 'policja kobieca' (Women Police), 'policjantka' (policewoman) and 'Paleolog,' with the results then checked for content, in the digitised database of the Library of Małopolska, http://mbc.malopolska.pl/dlibra (last visited 20 July 2014).

[51] 'Polska policja kobieca należy do najlepszych na świecie', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 26 May 1935, 3; Zofja Guzowska, 'Zadania policji kobiecej', *Kuryer Kobiecy: Dodatek do Ilustrowany Kuryer Codziennego*, 20 Feb. 1930; 'Policja kobieca wyśledziła króla handlarzy żywym towarem', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 8 Jul. 1928, 5; A.O., 'Policja kobieca w Polsce', *Kuryer Kobiecy: Dodatek do Ilustrowany Kuryer Codziennego*, 29 Jan. 1933.

[52] 'Poland's Joan of Arc'; '"Panna Władza" umacnia swoje stanowisko', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 31 Oct. 1936, 10.

[53] Piotr Gołdyn, 'Edmund Czapliński i jego literacki wkład w walkę z handlem kobietami i dziećmi', *Poznańskie Zeszyty Humanistyczne*, 3 (2004), 125–30; Janusz Lachowski, 'Szlakiem hańby i kobiety nad przepaścią. Problem handlu kobietami w filmach na podstawie szenariuszy Anatola Sterna', in Krzystof Stępnik and Monika Gabryś, eds., *Sensacja w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym (prasa, literature, radio, film)* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo WSPA, 2011), 291–301.

[54] *VIII Międzynarodowy Kongres*, 80–9.

[55] 'Rapport du III Congrés de police criminelle, 24–30.IX à Anvers', AAN Minsterstwo Spraw Zagranicznych 2056, 329–30.

on Jewish pimps.[56] For her part, Stanisława Paleolog entered discussions with Polish diplomatic staff abroad about monitoring the trafficking networks and even proposed that the 1930 international congress on trafficking in Warsaw consider establishing an international police force in Buenos Aires, but to no avail.[57] Polish activism made it an example of a country taking its obligations seriously in international forums and put pressure on other states to follow suit. Already in 1927 a League of Nations report concluded that, 'The trafficking in girls would be far greater both nationally and internationally were it not for the fact that the Polish Government has begun to take energetic measures to combat it'.[58] At the same time, the focus on 'Zwi Migdal' and other Jewish traffickers reaffirmed the notion within and outside of Poland that Jews dominated this trade and contributed to a tendency within Poland to conceive of the nation along ethnic lines that explicitly excluded Jews.[59] In this way, the policewomen contributed to the anti-Semitic turn in Polish politics in the 1930s. This was not the only way that the dominant narrative of the traffic took on an exclusionary logic, as an examination of the work of the policewomen with the purported victims reveals.

Policewomen and prostitutes

The public crusade against traffickers and pimps clearly redounded to the benefit of the Polish state and policewomen, who justified their force's expansion and wide-ranging powers even at a time when female police forces abroad saw their powers curtailed. However, the benefits of their work for prostitutes and victims of trafficking were less clear. Like many commentators at the time, Paleolog placed the root causes of prostitution and trafficking in Poland in entrenched rural poverty and underemployment.[60] She nonetheless clung to abolitionism's essentially moral characterisation of prostitution, above all blaming the male consumer, who 'by his constant search for temporary and non-binding sexual relations, creates the demand

[56] Siemińska, *Stan Walki*, 15; Witold Chodko, *Handel Kobietami*, 2nd edn (Warsaw: Zakłady Graficzne 'Dźwignia', (1938), 11–4, 21.

[57] 'Protokuł Konferencji Informancyjnej w Sprawie Handlu Kobietami i Dziećmi w Argentynie', 24 Nov. 1930, AAN MOS 192, 85–6.

[58] League of Nations, 'Report of the Special Body of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children, Part Two' (League of Nations Document C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV. [C.T.F.E./Experts/55]), 139.

[59] On the turn toward ethnic nationalism in Poland, see Brian Porter, *When Nationalism began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Paul Brykczynski, 'Political Murder and the Victory of Ethnic Nationalism in Interwar Poland', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 2013, available at http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/97869/paulbryk_1.pdf?sequence=1 (last visited 20 July 2014). On the complicated situation of Jews in interwar Poland, see especially Ezra Mendelsohn, 'Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?', in Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 130–9.

[60] On popular views of trafficking, see Radosław Antonów, 'Problem handlu "żywym towarem" w literaturze polskiej przełomu XIX i XX wieku', in Antonów Radosław, ed., *Drogi hańby: Piśmiennictwo polskie przełomu XIX i XX wieku o handlu 'żywym towarem'*, (Wrocław: Wydział Prawa, Administracji i Ekonomii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2013), 11–48. Paleolog's view in Paleolog, *Women Police*, 33.

and supply, which is connected with the existence of the traffic in women, and the exploitation of prostitution'.[61] Prostitution was at heart about the exploitation of women by male customers and mostly male pimps and procurers, and through trafficking this intersected with the narrative of the Polish nation's victimisation. By equating all cases of migratory prostitution with the worst instances of exploitation, and tying this rhetorically to the larger project of Poland's moral rebirth, Paleolog sidestepped the thorny issue of consent, labelling as criminal 'the export to foreign brothels of girls who had either themselves consented to this deportation or who had previously practised prostitution in their own countries'.[62] To be sure, Polish policewomen uncovered instances of appalling cruelty and abuse, such as the case of Perla Krochmal. Spirited to Brazil and sold to a brothel by her husband in 1924, Krochmal's letters to her mother in Poland describing her mistreatment led to his arrest on a return trip to Warsaw four years later.[63] But a monolithic concept of trafficking viewed as part of a moral national narrative failed to take into account a range of individual motivations. While a stream of prostitutes left Poland for brothels abroad, especially in the 1920s, many of these women chose to go abroad, likely driven by economic hardship.[64]

Not all cases reported as trafficking even involved prostitution, as illustrated by the much-publicised case of Morris Baskin, a Polish-born American Jew. In 1929 investigators in Warsaw's Women's Brigade and the fraud division uncovered a plot by Baskin to marry a series of women under false names in order to bring them to the United States. Police in Poland detained two of the three women he had married on this trip and arrested two rabbis, several municipal officials and Baskin's brother. Further investigations revealed the complicity of the American vice consul in Warsaw, who, along with Baskin, was subsequently apprehended in the United States and stood trial in Brooklyn.[65] The Baskin case had all the trappings of a sensational story of sex trafficking and received substantial attention in the press in Poland and abroad.[66] The Polish government reported it to the League of Nations as an example of the important work done by the Women Police.[67] The League, in turn, distributed a lengthy description of the case to member states, arguing that it was 'of considerable interest, because it showed the methods used in international trafficking in Poland'. The League memorandum noted that two women had been rescued but concluded grimly: 'The third girl ... followed Baskin and fell a victim

[61] Ibid. 37.
[62] Ibid. 78.
[63] 'Sprawozdanie', AAN MOS 176, 2–4; Paleolog, *Women Police*, 84.
[64] For a discussion of the difficult question of consent in the pre-war Habsburg lands, including Galician Poland, see Wingfield, 'Destination', 299–302.
[65] This case has been reconstructed from the extensive documentation in AAN KGPP 97; AAN MOS 1927, 54–90; United States National Archives, College Park, MD, RG 59, Visa Division Correspondence Regarding Immigration, Entry 72, Boxes 44 to 46 (150.069 Baskin, Morris).
[66] 'Ratujcie nasze dusze!', *Tajny Detektyw: Illustrowany Tygodnik Kriminalno Sądowy*, 10 Jan. 1932, 4–5; 'Baskin, Hall I Ska', *Gazeta Lwowska*, Mar. 4, 1930, 4. Foreign press clippings are in AAN KGPP 97.
[67] 'Activities of Women Police in Poland', League of Nations Archives, Geneva, Switzerland, R 3041, 11B/26721/2798.

to the traffic'.[68] The only problem was that no evidence ever emerged that the case involved prostitution. Rather, Baskin belonged to an extensive network specialising in visa and passport fraud.[69] But such details got lost amidst a flurry of press reports and international documentation on the case. Also unmentioned was the fact that the two women purportedly rescued from the traffic were subsequently convicted of visa fraud in Warsaw.[70]

The Baskin case underscores the malleability of the concept of trafficking, which intersected with acutely felt anxieties about emigration in interwar Poland. One newspaper account of the case explained that the 'trade in live goods' (*handel żywym towarem*), as the traffic in women was known in Polish, 'covers a new "kind of good" – whole families who struggle with poverty and lack of work in the old country and wish, even at the risk of their lives, to seek to improve their lot overseas'. Desperation and privation drove these families into the clutches of 'horrendous criminals, rabid hyenas feeding on the misfortune of others'.[71] Like prostitution, mass emigration resulted from rural overpopulation and underemployment, and, like prostitution, it had spurred waves of public anxiety and government crackdowns in the Polish lands since the late nineteenth century.[72] Some two million Poles left the country in search of opportunities abroad between 1923 and 1938, of whom perhaps only half eventually returned. The Polish state imposed restrictions claiming to guarantee emigrants' rights abroad and protect them from exploitation. With few instances of exploitation as symbolically charged as human trafficking, this came to justify a host of restrictive policies aimed at cutting down on emigration.[73]

Between 1926 and 1930 – the period of most intense emigration and greatest concern over trafficking – the Polish government passed measures curtailing the emigration of women, especially to Latin America and France, and placed strict controls on the issuance of passports, in particular to Jewish women.[74] Policewomen patrolled ports and railway stations, on watch for victims of the trade, and carefully vetted female applicants for passports to South America.[75] Inscribed into the sex traffic's narrative of victimisation and exploitation, emigration became an object of strict controls, ostensibly to protect migrants. But such controls perversely fostered the conditions they were meant to eradicate. They reduced opportunities for economic

[68] League of Nations, Traffic in Women and Children, 'Summary of Annual Reports for 1929' (League of Nations Document C.164.M.59.1931.IV [C.T.F.E. 498]), 8–9.

[69] State Department to US Consul Riga, 1 Mar. 1930, US NACP, RG 59, Visa Division Correspondence, Box 46 (150.069 Baskin, Morris, Part. 5), 87; Paleolog, *Women Police*, 82.

[70] US Consul General, Warsaw, to State Department, 20 Dec. 1932, US NACP RG 59, Visa Division Correspondence, Entry 702, Box 45 (150.069 Baskin, Morris, Part 6).

[71] Ratujcie nasze dusze!', 4.

[72] On the history of emigration panics in East Central Europe, see Tara Zahra, 'Travel Agents on Trial: Policing Mobility in East Central Europe, 1889–1989', *Past and Present*, 223, 1 (2014), 161–93.

[73] Anna Kicinger, 'Polityka Emigracyjna II Rzeczpospolitej', CEFMR Working Paper 4/2005, 7–8, available at http://www.cefmr.pan.pl/docs/cefmr_wp_2005–04.pdf, (last visited 12 Jul. 2014).

[74] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 13–4.

[75] 'Protokuł konferencji informancyjnej w sprawie handle kobietami i dziećmi w Argentynie', 24 Sept. 1930, AAN MOS 192, 85–6.

emigration precisely for the group of poor, rural women acknowledged to be a significant source of urban prostitution. By closing off legal avenues for young women seeking opportunities abroad, such measures left them more likely to turn to prostitution at home and more vulnerable to the approaches of passport forgers and human traffickers.[76]

Nor is it clear that the Women Police improved the lot of prostitutes in Poland. While the fight against pimps and traffickers played the most visible role in the Women Police's activities, the bulk of their daily work involved monitoring prostitutes.[77] Interwar Poland adopted 'neoregulationism', a system designed to rationalise state regulation of prostitution by shifting responsibility for oversight from the police to medical authorities.[78] Brothels were abolished, but prostitutes remained subject to obligatory registration and medical inspection. The female police brought registered prostitutes before medical commissions for inspections and uncovered and forced the compliance with the regulations of 'clandestine' prostitutes plying their trade without registering.[79] Though Paleolog, a committed abolitionist, envisioned neoregulationism as a transitional phase on the path towards abolition, her force helped shore up this modified version of regulated prostitution.[80] The replacement of the much-hated morals police with policewomen blunted criticisms of the inherent immorality of regulation without changing its basic logic.[81] Even as international opinion turned decidedly against regulation, and France and other outspokenly regulationist states faced mounting criticism over their policies in international forums, Poland drew praise for its efforts against trafficking and silence on the issue of regulation. Abolitionists in Poland, deprived of one of the most potent symbols of the corruption of regulation, made little headway in domestic debates until the mid-1930s.[82]

By 1935 the number of policewomen in service in Poland had dropped to thirty-five. With the threat of the traffic in women fading, no new training programmes had taken place since 1929.[83] To some degree, Poland's policewomen were victims of their own success, having apprehended several of the key players in the traffic. But the primary factor lay outside the country's borders. Mounting nationalism in Latin America led countries long associated with the vice trade, notably Argentina, to undertake moralising projects, tightening their borders and expelling foreign pimps

[76] For a similar critique of the recent collapsing of distinctions between sex trafficking and migration by purportedly selfless rescuers, see Laura María Agustin, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

[77] *Międzynarodowy Kongres*, 81–5.

[78] On neoregulationism's French origins, see Corbin, *Women*, 310–30.

[79] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 44–51; Stanislawa Paleolog, 'O policji kobiecej w zastosowaniu do walki z nierządem', *Na Posterunku: Gazeta Policji Państwowej*, 10, 30 (28 July 1928), 1–2.

[80] Stanislawa Paleolog, 'Trzy systemy zwalczania nierządu', *Na Posterunku: Tygodnik poświecony sprawom policji państwowej*, 17, 41 (6 Oct. 1935), 679–80.

[81] A similar dynamic seems to have unfolded in France, see Julia Christine Scriven Miller, '"The Romance of Regulation": The Movement Against State-Regulated Prostitution in France, 1871–1946', Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 2000.

[82] Siemińska, *Stan Walki*, 9.

[83] [Paleolog], 'Służba', AAN KGPP 1881, 182.

and prostitutes.[84] In this sense, Poland did serve as an international model for anti-trafficking efforts, though scarcely in ways that the observers in the League of Nations praising the country intended. At the same time, the rising prospects of abolitionism in Poland raised the spectre that the policewomen would no longer be needed to oversee prostitutes.

Paleolog penned a memorandum in 1935 laying out her vision for a greatly expanded Women Police. Recognising that trafficking out of Poland no longer offered a strong mandate for female policing, she looked abroad for inspiration, arguing that 'the work of policewomen cannot limit itself, as hitherto, only to investigative actions with a repressive character, but above all should pursue a line of preventive action, especially in relation to children and youths, to which precisely a woman by her nature has a particular calling'.[85] Paleolog's arguments resonated with the Polish police leadership. By the end of the year she was in charge of a newly founded central office for the Women Police in Warsaw, overseeing the training and activities of the nation's policewomen. New uniformed divisions of policewomen responsible for cases involving juveniles patrolled the streets and managed detention centres for wayward youths. Two training courses in 1935 and 1936 added 116 policewomen.[86] A further 100 policewomen went through two subsequent training courses in 1938 and 1939.[87] By 1939 policewomen were in service in sixteen Polish cities.[88]

While these reforms greatly expanded Poland's female police force, it also decisively shifted the nature of their work, which increasingly focused on social welfare tasks. The Polish female police, long distinct from Western counterparts, now approached the international norm. Paleolog hoped the reforms would mean an extension of the policewoman's role rather than a reorientation, but was chagrined to discover during her inspections of Women's Brigades that they failed to cultivate informants or to undertake investigations on their own initiative, focusing instead on preventive tasks.[89] Paleolog continued to advocate internationally for the Polish model of female policing and clashed with a German delegate at an international congress in Paris in 1937 over whether women were fit to carry out investigations and arrests.[90] Nonetheless, by the late 1930s the Polish Women Police had come to play a largely preventive role.

Poland's experiment in female policing, especially its willingness to challenge the dominant gender norms in police work, had long set it apart from other states. In most of Europe male police officials and political leaders blunted the revolutionary

[84] Chodźko, *Handel*, 22; Guy, *Sex*, 105–35; Paleolog, *Women Police*, 86.

[85] [Paleolog], 'Służba', AAN KGPP 1881, 183.

[86] 'Referat o działalności policji kobiecej w Polsce – na X Międzynarodowy Kongres Komitetów Zwalczania Handlu Kobietami i Dziećmi w Paryżu w r. 1937', AAN MOS 182, 56.

[87] Report, Komenda Główna Policji Państwowej, 13 Apr. 1938, AAN KGPP 1882, 27; 'Nowe policjantki przyjęto do służby', *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, 20 Aug. 1939, 12.

[88] Paleolog, *Women Police*, 25.

[89] 'Protokuł Odprawy Naczelników Urzędów Śledczej, która odbyła się w Cenrali Służby Śledczej w Warszawie, w dniu 2 i 3 czerwca 1937 roku', 108, AAN KGPP 2097.

[90] Filipina Stanisława Paleolog, 'X Międzynarodowy Kongres Komitetów Zwalczania Handlu Kobietami I Dziećmi W Paryżu', *Przegląd Policyjny*, 3, 3 (Mar. 1938), 147–8.

ambitions of the female police movement by promoting elements of the women's movements pushing for a restrictive vision of female policing premised on social welfare and prevention. By linking their experiences fighting for Poland's rebirth to a tradition of female insurrection in Poland and by adapting abolitionists' long-held conviction that policewomen could best combat trafficking, Poland's policewomen laid claim to an expansive range of powers that included investigations and arrests. This was still very much a version of policing built on gender difference, as policewomen found their work confined to specific moral offences. But this was difference in aptitude, expressed in terms of cases worked, rather than difference in capacity to carry out investigations or arrests, as was the case elsewhere.

The reliance on trafficking in women as a mobilising myth had a repressive as well as empowering logic, however. The symbolically potent image of the traffic in women transformed a diverse set of individual choices and experiences into a monolithic tale of sexual exploitation, moral ruination and national shame. This moralising narrative drowned out alternative perspectives on the problem and limited the range of responses to it. In the process, the policewomen contributed to building a legal and administrative edifice blocking the emigration of the poor young women they claimed to be helping. Nor did the policewomen succeed in achieving abolitionism at home, but rather sustained regulation by stripping critics of a powerful point of attack. This is not to diminish the achievements of the Women Police of Poland, who, more than anywhere else in interwar Europe, realised the radical abolitionist vision of empowering policewomen to tackle society's entrenched problems in ways that seemed beyond the range of traditional methods of masculine policing. It does, however, suggest the contradictions of abolitionist ideas for police reform. The same rhetorical emphasis on trafficking and prostitution that expanded the opportunities for policewomen in Poland ended up heightening the moral, political and legal constraints facing poor young women.

Epilogue

The Polish Republic's experiment in female policing came to an end with the German and Soviet invasion in September 1939. While some policewomen continued to oversee prostitution under the German occupiers, Paleolog left the police and put her skills to work for the Polish resistance, organising a cell gathering intelligence on the German forces.[91] She participated in the Warsaw uprising in 1944 and then went into hiding. Fearing Soviet repression, Paleolog fled Poland in 1946. Ironically, given her interwar work preventing the travel abroad of desperate, young women, Paleolog – desperate but no longer young – turned to networks of human smugglers to escape from Poland. She settled in Britain, where she died in 1968.[92]

[91] Adam Hempel, *Pogrobowcy klęski: Rzecz o policji 'granatowej' w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie, 1939–1945* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), 137.

[92] Urszula Paleolog, 'Wspomnienia', 90–143, Ossolineum, Rękopis 15548 II.

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