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Organised Crime in Poland – A Missing Link

An Abstract

This paper questions a lack of consideration for an underground activity in Poland before 1989. As such, this essay will challenge a popular assumption that organised crime did not exist before 1989 in the Polish People's Republic (PPR), and that, any forms of organised criminal enterprise were insignificant in states employing socialism as a dominant social and political system. That is done by linking the political situation of the Polish People's Republic with the economic conditions of its people during the 1980s. The author's PhD research relating to that subject will be used in support including pragmatic and political explanations of the emergence of organised crime in PPR in the 1980s and supplemented by a discussion on a state as an organiser and facilitator of (organised) crime. Thus, this paper discusses a missing link in the development and growth of organised crime in Poland; and it aims at contributing towards the historical criminology by discussing the roots of organised crime in Poland before 1989.

Key words: organised crime, state, the Polish People's Republic

Introduction

Organised crime often receives considerable attention in media nowadays. Nonetheless, for many people in Poland, its historical significance began around 1989 during the time of a democratic transition. One pattern relating to organised crime in Poland emerged from the author's PhD research. It relates to an observed failure to acknowledge the existence of organised crime (and legislation relating to it) before 1989 by most scholars and commentators. It became clear to the author that relevant legislation existed. Nonetheless, state representatives depicted it as irrelevant to organised forms of criminal activities. Also, an evolution of the organised crime phenomenon was overlooked commonly in the Polish People's Republic (PPR). Surprising about that situation is a level of over-trustworthiness on the ideological explanation supporting non-existence of organised crime developed and supported by the Soviet and Polish communists. Legal professionals and academics contributed to the development of such an explanation and perpetuated it over time. This rationale

was well represented and embedded in the scholarly debates during the twentieth century. It was easy for scholars and reporters to either believe in that justification or overlook it entirely by highlighting the year 1989 as a threshold date and a beginning of the organised crime phenomenon in Poland.

This paper challenges the prevailing assumption that organised crime did not exist before 1989 in the Polish People's Republic (PPR). That is done to avoid an accessible route of assuming that organised crime (and legal legislation relating to it) appeared in 1989 when the communism collapsed in Poland (Domański 2013; Łabuz 2014; Karpień 2017)¹. This argument rests on the following elements: (1) an idea of a state as facilitator of organised crime; (2) a discussion on a pragmatic and political explanation of a presence of organised crime; (3) a presence of a residual legislation pertaining to organised crime; (4) some accounts of organised crime before 1989 discussed by academics and journalists (inclusive of well-known instances popularised by officials of the People's Polish Republic), and (5) an unprecedented strength of organised crime which became visible in Poland around 1989. Also, this paper acts as a counter-weight to an overemphasis on organised crime as an enterprise devised only by non-state actors.

From a historical perspective, every succeeding society inherits a particular state of crime from the earlier one; and PPR inherited certain forms of an inter-war criminal activity (inclusive of its organised forms) from the Second Republic of Poland (Kochman 2011; Pływaczewski 2011). The most problematic matter when researching a history of organised crime lays in the fact that organised crime is not a consisted and continuous phenomenon. That said, we can assume a level of criminality in any society (Durkheim 2014), but there is no historical linearity (Foucault 2002) of the organised crime succession. We can only assert a continuity of an uninterrupted existence of a state itself and a level of the state's response to organised crime. Activities of organised crime groups will vary over time depending on several factors, for example, social conditions; the state's response; and internal group relationships, cohesion, and attitudes (their pretentiousness, structure, and complexity).

Some citizens, state officials, journalists, and academics accepted uncritically an argument that organised crime did not exist in PPR and that communism - as a social system - denigrated it entirely through effective distribution of work and goods. Thus, such an assumption is challenged below. The rationale for a refusal to accept an existence and active participation in social life by organised crime rested on the ideological explanation developed and popularised by the communist propaganda. Consequently, an acknowledgement made by communist states through their officials confirming the existence of an underworld would mean that the state-centred and -controlled economy was failing its citizens. That would also require a strong reaction of those states to tackle organised crime.

1 Some authors see the 1997 Criminal Code as a commencement of a more inclusive legislative approach towards organised crime. They also point out a technicality of a definitional differentiation as that code do not outline organised crime, but it defines in its article 258, *participation in an organised group or association aiming to commit crimes* (Miczkowska 2009; Indeck and Jurewicz 2014; Łabuz 2014). Others like, Laskowska (2009), see 1994 as the beginning and an introduction of the notion of organised crime legislation in Poland.

An absence of a topic in a public (and scholarly) debate creates a space for irregularities as some opportunists can occupy such a space. Thus, those in power can support that directly or indirectly using unofficial concessions allowing operations of organised criminal groups. Moreover, economic crimes can flourish thanks to a general weakness of the state; insufficient social distribution (low wages); irregularities in administration and supervision; a lack of a structured system of control; and management of common property (Kozdra 2017). The latter is ironic when considered in a context of the Soviet Communism which was a social system proud for being able to steer an entire state and its economy centrally.

We can assume for our deliberations here two levels of the organisational spectrum of organised crime groups: (1) sporadic or opportunistic (less structured or occasional), and (2) enterprises (well structured, pre-planned, or arranged). The first one was potentially a basis allowing for the emergence of more advanced versions of operations. Still, both occurred in conditions of real socialism. A primary difference between the two lays in a level of organisation of network (Van de Bunt, Siegel, and Zaitch 2013; Fijnaut 2014; Pires, Schneider, and Herrera 2016; Sergi 2017) and structure. Also, the involvement of at least one state official in facilitating criminal activity indicates potentially an organised character of that activity.

In PPR, in conditions of constant shortages of basic goods, the government was in no position to prevent all attempts to smuggle goods to the state. Officials could either accept it and make efforts to prevent it or make themselves involved for their own (or group) benefit. Thus, state officials (representing the legal sphere) can commission or allow organised crime groups (representing the illegal sphere) to operate. That relates to a concept of a state as a facilitator where a state (or a government) creates or allows for the creation of conditions favouring or favourable to specific groups or individuals performing an (illegal) activity.

The State as An Organiser and Facilitator of (Organised) Crime

Considering the above, the state as part of its primary functions grants itself a concession for violence (the state's monopoly on violence), so it can do the same through its agents in relation to other forms of organised violence. Thus, that state can grant a similar concession to other social actors (organised crime groups). That allows for organised crime groups to run their operations thanks to the state's support (Ruggiero 2017a, 2017b). Susanne Karstedt (2014) notes that the state (as a standalone social actor or as a facilitator of organised crime) is often visibly absent in official reports. Thus, the state is more often pictured as a victim of an organised crime enterprise, but less often portrayed as a facilitator of structured or organised crime, or as an actor organising crime. The latter view refers to the situation where the state offers a solution to (social) problems by ensuring security and protection in exchange for a form of taxation (*organised state crime* arranged as an institutionalised protection racket). It starts with a tax collection as a form of contribution towards one's protection thanks to the state's monopoly on violence (Tilly 1985). Then, tax collection (and its benefits) incentivises that state to make attempts to extend control over more territories to generate more tax. As a result of such enlargement, the state can gain more power over its citizens.

In the initial phases of states development, as noted by Karstedt (2014), states' expansion leads to an overwhelming competition between different states (their governments, or agencies) resulting in taking on board the attitude of criminal actors. Then, the state becomes powerful enough to mask the state officials' unlawful activities due to the state's capacity to obstruct their liability. Additionally, authorities (exploiting the law as a social instrument) generate two separate social spheres of life, the legal and illegal one. Thus, a state acting as a facilitator of organised crime demonstrates a significant level of hypocrisy when the legal (means) permeates the illegal (means), and *vice versa*. Then, the state acting in that capacity as a facilitator of syndicates is breaking its standards.

Conversely, Karstedt (2014) notes how states can be overpowered by their incapability to prevent organised crime (or more broadly in dispensing justice) and corruption amongst those employed by them. As, if the state does not control corruption, it further fails in controlling organised state violence. For Baranowska (2016), in PPR - the country representing real socialism as a primary state ideology - Marxism was particularly important to that state. It paid much attention to organised forms of violence (i.e. army, and militias) and their institutionalised forms. Strangely, the army was treated as an element accommodating social liberation, and as a force securing all achievements of socialism (in the form of social regeneration and reconditioning) (*ibid.*).

Similarly, a state can use the attitudes and practices of organised crime groups. That is particularly visible in cases of state-induced genocides and crimes against humanity (including military violence) (Karstedt 2014). In ideal conditions, the state should be solely responsible for creating circumstances for its agents to work effectively (by creating suitable structural conditions and by establishing strong social relationships). When that is not the case, those who deviate from the above could offer preferential treatment towards organised crime activities of its agents (*ibid.*). Karstedt warns not to identify state crimes with organised crimes, or to make state crimes and organised crimes synonymous. As "[o]rganized crime and criminal enterprise need the criminal purpose, and this purpose is a precondition for the state to become an organized crime actor." (*ibid.* 2014:305). While having in mind that cautioning, the state recognises what constitute criminal activities. Moreover, it does not prevent the state (and its agents) from performing activities which the same state designates as criminal. No matter what ties the two matters together - a creation of favourable conditions for organised crime activity and the state's activity in that space directly or indirectly through its agents - one must remember that either formal or informal collaboration between state and non-state actors occur regularly. Nonetheless, that often happens in a non-criminal capacity (i.e. plea bargaining). Both historically and contemporary, such cooperation is very pronounced in the space of national security and intelligence (*ibid.*). In PPR, as a consequence of such inconspicuous connections, the government through the Security Service become intertwined with organised crime groups.

There are at least two possible explanations for the emergence of organised crime in PPR. The first *pragmatic explanation* relates to a social structure of the society, the state's structures at the time, but also, possible reasons for the state to support (openly or covertly) organised crime operations. The second *political*

explanation rests mainly on political and ideological consequences of such support relating to as *an informal concession* for the organised crime groups to operate. Both of those accounts overlap, but one would possibly be more pronounced depending on the social status of a person. When a person occupies a higher social position, they will more likely benefit indirectly (politically or financially) of these practices. As a result, they can utilise a more abstract ideological explanation.

Meanwhile, closer to the lower parts of a hierarchy of structure, one would be more prone to utilise a pragmatic explanation. It is due to the proximity of the lower ranked officials to organised criminal activities. Such an explanation helps in self-persuasion of those lower ranked officials that they are acting morally, even though they are benefiting financially or materially from these illegal practices.

Pragmatic Reasons for the Emergence of Organised Crime in the 1980s

For Brotz and Wilson (1946:371) in a society organised in a hierarchy of command (like PPR), power is subleased. Within the Security Service organisation, an informal concession for organised crime activities could have been used to exercise more power (by those who were in control) or as a power-grabbing tool (by those who did not have, or felt that did not have enough power and control, for example, over their professional life or within their professional structure). In both instances, one could do that by gaining control over goods or people by granting such an informal concession to, and supporting, individuals or organised crime groups. Similarly, substantial and direct income can be gained because of the same concession. That would improve one's financial and material situation (as owning of some necessary household equipment was worth more than owning the PPR's currency) and could equate to higher social status (not necessarily comparable to just being a higher earner). Also, basic necessities were unavailable and most of the time regulated. As the state rationed those goods and gained power by controlling those resources. Likewise, whoever owned the supply, or had control over it, could easily exercise power associated with providing others with otherwise unavailable goods.

Pragmatically, those who were gaining financially from these activities (with a high level of probability) were distributing some share of their earning to the higher-ranked officers or officials to secure the continuity of their concessions and their rights (to be able) to grant these to others. One of the conditions as part of the concession might have been an obligation to gather intelligence on the opposition and unionists (i.e. members of the Solidarity movement). Similarly, such concession was a tool of direct influence and impact (through unofficially gathered resources) which state officials could use to intimidate or infiltrate the opposition. Thus, cooperation between some state agents and organised crime aided an operational work of the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Michał Arndt (2015) discusses the controllability of small group operations in relation to the gullibility or malleability of the hand-picked military judges (comparable to the ordinary ones). By analogy, organised crime groups are in most cases reasonable in size, and as a result, easy to control by government officials. Similarly, it was easier to manage a semi-military structure of organised crime as the state's system was already well-tuned to the military-like operations (clear ranks, tasks, responsibility, and control).

Organised crime can be a form of alternative governance (Utas 2012) occurring in conditions of social disorganisation, as bottom-up expectations of a more structured system of governance, and as a response to a lack of it. In PPR, by allowing criminal enterprises to thrive, a state or its representatives were able to control more strictly a black-market and state's backstage (Goffman 1990). Also, in times where the state was struggling to supply basic goods, such governance created a way to (by meeting the basic needs via backstage activities) to prevent citizens from opposing openly those in power. Also, such a system of governance generated additional income which could be used in whatever way those in power wanted.

Political Reasons for the Emergence of Organised Crime in the 1980s

From a political viewpoint, the communist system was failing on its main selling point (providing work and goods equally to everyone). Thus, by allowing organised crime operations, those granting the concession alleviated (to an extent) a need to supply most of the basic goods by the inefficient socialist economic setup. It was a way to supply basic goods by proxy of organised crime groups. Then, those who accommodated such a process were preventing a general dissatisfaction with the country's current economic situation. As a result, they encumber social unrests which could occur due to a shortage of necessities². Also, citizens gaining access to goods in such a way would try to avoid the state's scrutiny. Goods were often-times used as currency (in its own right), and there was a need to barter for other goods considering the double-digit inflation³.

For some leaders, it was a more acceptable solution to allow someone else to perform fraudulent actions than to admit publicly that the economic, political, and social situation of the country was insufficiently developed and inadequately governed. Correspondingly, a potential political cost for PPR was smaller in case of a failure and disclosure of the covert operations. As, those who were granted with a concession could have been prosecuted and found guilty (leniently) so that their political patrons will stay unblemished. In case of exposure of the organised crime activity, such event could be used to persuade the public that, it was the opposition who organised those endeavours (or were closely cooperating with those groups); and as such, the opposition is partially responsible for shortages (or stealing) of goods. The PPR state used any such opportunities to address problems of organised crime unobtrusively. Since, in reality, it was an attempt to sentence oppositionists. As effectively, anyone who was accused and found guilty of *acting jointly and in an*

² Allowing organised crime groups to supply essential goods was a way to prevent social dissatisfaction and any consequences associated with it, as back then, the market was able to absorb any amounts of basic goods. For example, such a situation was seen in the first few years after 1989 when goods were absorbed unreservedly by the society.

³ The double-digit inflation was present during most of the 1980s only interrupted by brief period of an even bigger triple-digit inflation in 1982 and 1989 (Kolodko, Gotz-Kozierkiewicz, and Skrzyszewska-Paczek 1992).

organised fashion or engaging in *organised activity* was most likely a member of the Solidarity (Czyżak 2007; Lityński 2007), or in a way treated as *an enemy of the state*⁴.

From the early days on the 20th-century in many states including PPR, criminal law was approached as an individual (and individualistic) enterprise. Such an approach allowed to focus on an individual, their shortcomings, and potential activities against the state or other people. It is a social tool to distract the public eye from any of the possible shortcomings of the state (including those directed at its citizens). Such a social diversion allows the state to control those who would be opposing or even merely not supporting that state and its actions. In that way, the state takes full control over lives of its citizens, so when every single individual is controlled (for example, the Stasi surveillance performed to an extent unseen ever before) than a group (consisting of those already controlled individuals) does not need to be controlled. In other words, when one controls all the elements of the whole, it effectively controls the whole through its individual elements.

A Residual Legislation Relating to Organised Crime

It seems that many Polish academics do not find a historical study of the organised crime legislation as a worthy task. There are only a few notable examples of academics (Kochman 2011; Pływaczewski 2011; Turaliński 2011; Łoś 2014; Kozdra 2017) who noticed groups of smugglers and thieves capable of organising themselves⁵, and some groups of well-arranged financial groups (proto-forms of what we now consider organised crime groups). As instead of looking into the development of instruments relating to this phenomenon which existed for many decades, they preferred to focus on the conditions, dynamics, and structures of contemporaneous organised crime (Rau 2002; Kurowski 2006; Laskowska 2009). Only some Polish researchers discuss general developments of organised crime in some places of the world from a historical perspective (Rau 2002; Miczkowska 2009; Turaliński 2011). Whereas, some acknowledge that the 1932 Criminal Code (which was still in force after the Second World War) held legislation relating to the *felonious relationship* (Łabuz 2014; Karpiel 2017), *criminal bands* (Kochman 2011), or *professional crime* (Rau 2002). Some also note that articles 166 and 167 of that Criminal Code (Bojarski et al. 2015:50) penalised taking part, setting up, or directing a group aiming at committing crimes.

Other relevant legislation relates to pseudo-legislative dispositions in the form of *decrees*. In PPR, decrees were a collective tool of social and political oppression against specific categories of people (Nazi collaborators, the Home Army soldiers, political opposition, and economically driven criminals) (Wróbel and Zoll 2014:70–73). Some of the most significant decrees are: the Decree on the Period of Rebuilding of the State, the Decree on Offences Particularly Dangerous in the Period of Rebuilding the State (Wasek and Frankowski 1993), the Ad-Hoc

4 “... while deciding how to punish a perpetrator, a level of threat to a totalitarian legal order above all was important, and whether a perpetrator was an enemy or an advocate of a totalitarian system” (Wróbel and Zoll 2014:59).

5 It was thanks to the weakness of the state which could not guard its borders and effectively creating a space for certain groups who were able to perform their activities.

Procedure Decree (Czyżak 2007), and the Decree Establishing a Special Commission for Combating Economic Abuses and Corruption (Kładoczny 2004). The last decree formed a unique extra-judicial body combining investigative and judiciary features established to combat underworld activities (Wróbel and Zoll 2014). Wasek and Frankowski (1993) highlight an exceptional level of procedural simplicity of the post-war legislation which helped in quick sentencing of all those (individuals or groups) opposing the new state setup.

The PPR officials considered a possibility of an existence of organised crime. That view cannot be discounted by their official ideology relating to either the non-existence of organised crime or announced intentions of specific legislation (which might in fact related to organised forms of criminal activity). In socialist countries, organised crime was regarded as a concept only relevant to capitalist countries. Rau (2002) notes that communists saw speculations of rationed goods and an appropriation of public property as relevant forms of professional crime.

Some Accounts of Organised Crime prior to 1989 by Academics and Journalists

When it comes to journalists, there are at least few examples of books and articles worth revisiting which revolve around organised crime prior to 1989. Kunicki and Ławecki (2017) in their work discuss some cooperation between the underground and the special military services (and the militia). Similarly, there are examples of the collaboration of money-changers with the Security Service officers (Szczepański 2014), as such “taxation” of the black foreign exchange market was one of the sources of income of the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ornacka and Pytlakowski 2004). Ornacka and Pytlakowski discuss some examples of specific individuals who were well-known in the 1970s, amongst them was one individual who supposedly directed a criminal group (the Pruszków gang).

One of the few academics openly admitting the existence of organised crime in PPR is Maria Łoś (2014). She maintains that an argument of the development and sustainment of extensive links with the organised crime networks by local elites is also applicable during communist times. Łoś supports that view with a figure of more than one-third of people convicted of - what we currently recognise as - organised crime activity between 1959-64 were people holding executive positions. Organised crime thrived within the state’s trade and services sectors (namely, home repairs, appliance repairs, catering, etc.), and in later years, on extortions and forms of economic crimes (Kozdra 2017). Organised criminal groups dominated food speculation. It is due to a somewhat lenient approach of the communist law enforcement agencies towards organised crime (with few exceptions, i.e. the so-called *Meat Scandal*).

Interestingly, Łoś (2014) points out that women committed some of these crimes due to their less pronounced social visibility (as home-staying and not necessarily holding a day job which was a mandatory requirement for males). That relates to petty speculators of everyday items (food, clothes, or cosmetics), or even stolen state property (art, agricultural machinery, or construction materials). It shows that whenever the state is unable to exercise its power using organised violence, it can bestow that task to some other formation (no matter how it is organised).

Turaliński (2011) also discusses the activities of some organised crime groups during the 1970s and 1980s. These groups were mostly poorly organised gangs of car thieves, burglars, and small-scale smugglers which underwent a transformation around 1989.

Pragmatic Reasons to Change Status of One's Entrepreneurial Activity

One can safely assume that any entrepreneurial activity (either in a state devised or shadow economy) would not diminish automatically due to a change in circumstances. As a core idea of an entrepreneurial spirit revolves around an idea of a constant adjustment to changing conditions. That said, once a business or quasi-business activity gain a chance to redevelop itself, it will most likely utilise it. In favourable conditions as an outcome of that, many of those who had operated in a shadow economy would consider legalising their enterprise. It can be done as a result of either a cost-benefit analysis (weighting costs and benefits of activities not supported by a state) or emotional-ethical consideration (by legalising one's activity for the sake of peace of mind, or to eliminate an emotional or ethical burden). In those cases, those people could decide to either continue in a current covert form or reinvent their business model and legalise it.

The Unprecedented Strength of Organised Crime Groups Which Appeared in Poland around 1989.

Some gangs which operated before 1989 in PPR transformed themselves (during the 1990s) to be more structured and professional. For Turaliński (2011) such a professionalisation of underground groups happened as a direct result of a dissolution of the Militia formation which was not substituted proportionally with another policing formation and making space for organised crime to grow. Another factor relates to the scope of criminalisation in the 1990s legislation which was reduced especially in relations to the anti-state offences (Wasek and Frankowski 1993). Moreover, in February 1990, the forfeiture of the defendant's property as an added part of one's sentence was repealed. That move attracted some criticism and was evoked as one of the major causes of the rise in criminal economic activity of the 1990s and early 2000s (ibid.). The widespread and wild privatisation also needs to be considered in this discussion. Furthermore, the strength and professionalisation of organised crime groups in the early 1990s can be associated with an experience which those groups gained during the 1980s (and in some cases even before that).

These organised crime groups had enough time and political support to establish their presence and cement their unofficial (and later on official) businesses. During the 1990s transition of the country's system into a free market mode, these groups were already well-attuned to the new reality as these had enough experience gained during the 1980s on an internal black-market and abroad.

Organised crime activity of the 1990s was centred on financial instruments which were a *novum* in the 1990s. These required a certain level of preparation, skills, and know-how which could not be acquired instantaneously. After decades of the centrally controlled state's economy and limited foreign influences, any

organisation needed time for proper acquisition of that knowledge. Consequently, these groups and some of their *modi operandi* could not appear overnight in 1989. Academics in the 1990s tended to centre their discussions only around that novel activity. They assumed that most of that activity occurred due to an opportunistic usage of occasions created in the process of the systemic transformation of the 1990s. It was an easy task to look only for the causes of such situation in the back-in-the-day economic situation (or rather a turmoil) and to use the symbolic year of 1989 as a cut-off-point for any deliberation on the emergence and existence of the organised crime in Poland.

That somewhat simplistic overview of the situation was reproduced over several decades, and it is still present in the academic discourse. Nonetheless, what was missing in this 1990s analysis was an investigation and causality of the earlier versions and forms criminal activities of a proto-form of what we now refer to as an organised crime. It is a surprising situation if one takes under account the fact that organised crime due to its nature requires a specific (even minimalistic) level of cooperation between at least two people (Vlassenroot and Perrot 2012; Van de Bunt et al. 2013). As such, from its early existence in the 20th-century, the Polish state recognised and penalised forms of criminality which entail some level of cooperation. Thus, one can question why the legislators, but also the academic community, overlooked it for so long. Was that to do with a simple economy of research (by relying on the commonly accepted date of 1989 as a point in the changeover of the state's system), or had it to do with something else? Alternatively, maybe it had something to do with the fact that those activities which would be considered right now as part of the umbrella term of organised crime were a part of activities of the centrally steered economy? Alternatively, more pervasively, that those activities were performed by or with structural support of the state or its officials? Unquestionably, it was more comfortable from the political and propaganda perspective not to highlight instances of organised crime by the state in the public sphere, even though in some instances the PPR officials decided to do the opposite, for example, by publicising the so-called *meat scandal*. It was one of the highlights of 1965 as the public television broadcasted immensely the trial as a prime example of the anti-state activity of a group of nearly a dozen people. Perversely, it was also a prime example of how the state was approaching the criminal law as an instrument of the mass deterrent from similar activities which were a common occurrence at the time within the state's companies. It was an example of the state exercising the 19th-century fear-mongering techniques (Foucault 1982) using the 20th-century mass communication tools, like television.

Conclusions

It was public knowledge that only those who were supported by the Security Service were granted their unofficial concession to operate in return for information and a share in profits. Some of those activities had a more or less organised character. For example, illegal on-street trading of foreign currencies was considered as a treason-alike subversive activity. Contemporarily, we are treating these activities as petty crimes. Thus, it was common knowledge that only those money-changers

designated by the Security Service could make these transactions in the same places in the long-term. By setting or allowing a criminal enterprise to flourish, a state or its agents were able to control more closely a black-market through the state's backstage (Goffman 1990). That is important in times where the state struggles with supplying necessary goods to its people. As by supplying goods via backstage activities that state creates a way to prevent somewhat the citizens from openly opposing those in power.

Conversely, it was a way to generate added income which could be used in whatever form those in power wanted (as the private profit of state officials or institutional income to be utilised for other covert operations). Finally, many of those who remember the 1980s in PPR were exposed to what we now brand as organised crime. That was done in the form of organised social cooperation existing to supply necessary daily goods in conditions of a constant shortage of products. A narrative of the non-existence of organised crime before 1989 which was developed and accepted in the public sphere did not necessarily match the reality.

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