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## **The Dutch state as a pimp. Policies regarding a brothel on Curacao (1945-1956)**

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## THE DUTCH STATE AS A PIMP

### Policies regarding a brothel on Curaçao (1945-1956)

#### Abstract

*Campo Alegre on the island Curaçao (one of the Netherlands Antilles, part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands) is the largest open-air brothel in the world. Dutch authorities started this state brothel in 1949. They did so in an attempt to stop the spread of venereal diseases. The brothel did not solve that problem or any other problem related to prostitution. The United Nations repeatedly and severely criticised Dutch authorities for their involvement with Campo Alegre. The Dutch government was accused of not fighting prostitution, and, more importantly, stimulating or encouraging human trafficking. This criticism was no reason to close the brothel or change policies. This article ties in with debates regarding policy change. Our leading question is why Dutch authorities set up the brothel, and why they did not respond to complaints that were persistent and came from authoritative bodies such as the UN.*

In 1949, the brothel *Campo Alegre* opened its doors on the Caribbean island Curaçao. The Chief of Police, the Dutch Minister of Health, representatives of the Catholic Church and the head of the US military forces on the island all agreed to this initiative. The Colonial Governor approved it and the Dutch Savings Bank provided a loan.<sup>1</sup> The brothel was meant to serve Dutch marines, US soldiers, Shell oil company workers and seamen.<sup>2</sup> It was estimated that there were about 8,500 single men on the island, while 20,000 seamen docked at the island every month.<sup>3</sup>

In general, attempts to regulate prostitution led to debate between those in favour of regulation and those in favour of prohibition. Authorities were plagued by a *dammed if you do and damned if you don't* scenario.<sup>4</sup> If they did

1. K. Kempadoo, 'Prostitution, marginality and empowerment: Caribbean women in the sex trade', *Beyond Law* 5:4 (1996) 69-84.

2. T. de Reus, *Geslachtsziekten op Curaçao* (Assen 1970) 75.

3. K. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies: Caribbean women in the Dutch sex trade* (Michigan 1994) 151-156.

4. P. de Vries, *Kuisheid voor mannen, vrijheid voor vrouwen. De reglementering en bestrijding van prostitutie in Nederland 1850-1911* (Hilversum 1997); P. de Vries, "'White slaves' in a colonial nation: the Dutch campaign against the traffic in women in the early twentieth century', *Social & Legal Studies* 14:1 (2005) 39-60.

nothing they were accused of not caring for morality, the fate of women and girls, or the health of men. If authorities did try to regulate prostitution – by enforcing medical checks for the women, and registering women and brothels – they faced strong moral protest from civil organisations that accused the government of facilitating prostitution. In both cases the state was accused of acting as a pimp, either because the state, like a pimp, enabled prostitution, or else because it, also like a pimp, did not care about the consequences.<sup>5</sup> Japan was one of the few exceptions in which the state actually organised prostitution and recruited prostitutes. During the Second World War, Japanese colonial and military authorities set up brothels for Japanese soldiers in Korea.<sup>6</sup> The Dutch colonial government in the West Indies was the other exception (at the time the decision was taken and still is now).

Dutch authorities on Curaçao started the brothel and financed it. Until 1949, the Netherlands played a leading role in fighting prostitution and trafficking both within and outside Europe. They had been active in drafting international treaties against trafficking and had signed every treaty, until they got involved with the brothel on Curaçao. The involvement of Dutch authorities led to severe international criticism, to be discussed below. Rather surprisingly this was no reason for policy change. Dutch authorities gave political and economic reasons for starting the brothel and pointed towards the health risks that came with unregulated prostitution. A comparison of Curaçao with Aruba – that we will make in this article – shows how on Aruba upcoming local elections influenced the outcome of debates regarding the regulation of prostitution. On Aruba debates started after decisions had been taken on Curaçao. Authorities on Aruba could look at Curaçao to see what the effects of the state brothel were. Our leading questions are why Dutch authorities decided to start the brothel on Curaçao, and why they did not change policies after severe international criticism had been voiced.

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5. J.M. Luiz and L. Roets, 'On prostitution, STDS and the law in south Africa: the state as pimp', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 18:1 (2000) 21-38; S. Woolman and M. Bishop, 'State as pimp: sexual slavery in South Africa', *Development Southern Africa* 23: 3 (September 2006) 385-400; M.D. Connolly, M.B. Padilla, A. Matiz Reyes and S. Natsui, 'Beyond 'state pimping': insights from local leaders on HIV/AIDS prevention in the Dominican tourism industry', *Critical Public Health* 22:3 (2012) 355-371.

6. J. Lie, 'The state as pimp: prostitution and the patriarchal state in Japan in the 1940s', *The Sociological Quarterly* 38:2 (Spring 1997) 251-263.

## Theory

This article ties in with academic debates about when and why policies change.<sup>7</sup> The literature focuses on when and why policies do change, while we in this article try to explain when and why they do not. Political scientists see policy change as the authorities' reply to problems and crises, structural changes and shifts in power relations.<sup>8</sup> Politicians who justify (controversial) policies do so by claiming that their actions are not only legal, but also benefiting 'the people'.<sup>9</sup> Conditions become problems when there is consensus that something should be done about them, because they violate values that are seen as important, or when they make one country look bad in comparison to other countries.<sup>10</sup> International bodies can push for change, especially when they are powerful enough to publicly shame a country, and accuse it of doing worse than other countries. Electoral landslides or potential political shifts in the balance of power, and references to economic downturn or increases in importance (for instance due to an increasing number of prostitutes) are used to argue in favour of policy change.<sup>11</sup> Sudden events and highly dramatised stories can also trigger change. Policy change need not lead to changes in practice. New policies can be used to justify existing practices.

We explore six factors that can explain why policies change according to the literature:

1. Pressure from (international) organisations (such as the UN) in combination with comparisons to other countries;
2. Changes in the balance of power (i.e. outcomes of elections);
3. Changes in numbers (i.e. number of prostitutes, number of people with venereal disease);
4. Economic changes;

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7. D. Kübler, 'Understanding policy change with the advocacy coalition framework: an application to Swiss drug policy', *Journal of European Public Policy* 8:4 (2001) 623-641; D. Béland, 'Ideas, institutions, and policy change', *Journal of European Public Policy* 16:5 (2009) 701-718; C. Harrington, 'Prostitution policy models and feminist knowledge politics in New Zealand and Sweden', *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 9 (2012) 337-349; M. Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, 'The civic origins of progressive policy change: combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975-2005', *American Political Science Review* 106: 3 (August 2012) 548-569.

8. F.B. Alink, *Crisis als kans? Over de relatie tussen crisis en hervormingen in het vreemdelingenbeleid van Nederland en Duitsland* (Amsterdam 2006) 13-15.

9. L.M. Rojo and T.A. van Dijk, "'There was a problem, and it was solved!': Legitimatising of the expulsion of "illegal" migrants in Spanish parliamentary discourse', *Discourse & Society* 8 (1997) 523-566.

10. J.W. Kingdon, *Agendas, alternatives and public policies* (New York 1984/second print 1995).

11. S. Bonjour, *Grens en gezin. Beleidsvorming inzake gezinsmigratie in Nederland, 1955-2005* (Maastricht 2009) 15-18, 312-331.

5. Earlier policies; and
  6. The effect of sudden events and highly publicised and dramatised stories.
- In this article we investigate which of these factors are relevant to our case.

## Historiography

There is a vast literature on prostitution, and its regulation (especially in harbour towns). Much of the literature focuses on the nineteenth century and North-Western European countries, although there are also a few titles that pay attention to the colonial context (but hardly to the West Indies).<sup>12</sup> State interest in prostitution is not new. In the nineteenth century, studies focused on the spread of venereal disease.<sup>13</sup> In 1879 and 1880, Abraham P. Fokker, a Dutch professor of medicine at Groningen University, argued in favour of control and registration.<sup>14</sup> It led to extensive debates between the people who were in favour of the regulation of prostitution and those who were in favour of a ban.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, prostitution is described in the literature from two perspectives. Either prostitution is seen as the result of poverty among women, or as the ultimate expression of a patriarchal society in which rape, sexual slavery, and sexual terrorism are rampant.<sup>16</sup> This first perspective presents prostitution in the realm of the capitalist political economy. The second perspective,

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12. E. Feldman, 'Prostitution, the alien woman and the progressive imagination, 1910-1915', *American Quarterly* 19: 2 (1967) 192-206; R.J. Evans, 'Prostitution, state and society in imperial Germany', *Past & Present* 70 (1976) 106-129; L. Bryder, 'Sex, race, and colonialism: an historiographical review', *The International History Review* 20:4 (1998) 806-822; S.O. Rose, 'The 'Sex Question' in Anglo-American relations in the Second World War', *The International History Review* 20:4 (1998) 884-903; I. Tracol-Huynh, 'Between stigmatisation and regulation: prostitution in colonial Northern Vietnam', *Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care* 12:1 (2010) 73-87; Y. Svanström, Policing public women. The regulation of prostitution in Stockholm 1812-1880. Dissertation Stockholm University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Economic History (Stockholm 2000); A. van Drenth, 'The city and the self. The case of girls' protection in the Netherlands around 1900', *Educational Review* 54:2 (2002) 125-132; S. Limoncelli, *The politics of trafficking: the first international movement to combat the sexual exploitation of women* (Stanford 2010); V. Huber, 'Connecting colonial seas: the 'international colonisation' of Port Said and the Suez Canal during and after the First World War', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 19:1 (2012) 141-161.

13. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 20-21.

14. A.P. Fokker, *De Prostitutie Kwestie* (Haarlem 1879); A.P. Fokker, *De Prostitutie-Kwestie in de Tweede Kamer en voor de openbare meening* (Haarlem 1880).

15. These debates have been summarised in De Vries, *Kuisheid voor mannen, vrijheid voor vrouwen*.

16. Kempadoo, 'Prostitution, marginality and empowerment', 69.

mainly advocated by feminist authors, presents prostitution as an expression of patriarchy.<sup>17</sup>

There is some literature specifically about *Campo Alegre*, mainly written by the British sociologist Kamala Kempadoo.<sup>18</sup> According to Kempadoo, clients favour light-skinned mulatto women from the Dominican Republic over other, darker women. The lawyers Martin and Alofs briefly described *Campo Alegre* and pointed out that the brothel could only exist because it was registered as a coffeehouse, rather than as a brothel.<sup>19</sup> Doctor De Reus used *Campo* in a study on the spread of venereal disease on Curaçao in the years 1965-1966 and found that the regulation of prostitution did not stop the spread of venereal disease.<sup>20</sup> The historians Van Dissel and Groen wrote about the marine in the Caribbean (between 1634 and 2010) and mentioned *Campo Alegre* in that context since worries about the spread of venereal disease were a problem for the marine.<sup>21</sup> The current article adds to this literature by interpreting state regulation in the colony as a form of remote control. This article connects the story about *Campo Alegre* with debates about policy change. It contrasts policies in the Netherlands and in Europe with those in the Netherlands Antilles, and it compares Curaçao and Aruba.

## Materials and methods

For this article we used Dutch government archives: the archives of the Ministry of Defence (Commander of Sea Power in the Dutch Antilles 1946-1989);<sup>22</sup> the archive of the Ministry of Colonies (which contains documents on the policy regarding the brothel and regarding international pressure on Dutch authorities, and the lease for the ground on which *Campo Alegre* was

17. Ibidem, 69.

18. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*; K. Kempadoo, *Sun, sex, and gold. Tourism and sex work in the Caribbean* (Oxford 1999); K. Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean. Gender, race, and sexual labor* (New York 2004); Kempadoo, 'Prostitution, marginality and empowerment', 69-74.

19. U.H.C. Martin, 'Hoe "Campo Alegre" ontstond', in: *Koperen Polyfonie 12½-jarig bestaan van de Juridische Faculteit van de Universiteit van de Nederlandse Antillen. Opstellen aangeboden ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid aan Prof. Mr. W.R. Boom* (Willemstad 1984) 30-42; L. Alofs, 'Publieke dames in een publiek debat. De geschiedenis van Campo Alegre op Aruba, 1950-1957', in: G.F.M. Bossers, A.R.O. Ringeling and M. Tratnik, *Cinco Aña Na Caminada, Opstellen aangeboden ter gelegenheid van het eerste lustrum van de (Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid van de) Universiteit van Aruba* (Oranjestad 1993) 21-32.

20. De Reus, *Geslachtsziekten op Curaçao*.

21. A. van Dissel and P. de Groen, *In de West. De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in het Caribisch gebied* (Franeker 2010).

22. National Archive (NA), Archive Ministry of Colonies (MOC) no. 2.10.54; NA, Archive Ministry of Defense: Commander of Sea power Netherlands Antilles 1946-1989 (MOD) no. 2.13.112, archive block number D18.

built);<sup>23</sup> the archive of the Ministry of Justice (Department of Law) regarding international organisations in the period 1946-1989;<sup>24</sup> the archive of the Ministry of Marine Military Bodies and Subjects in the Territories of Curaçao and Suriname 1934-1947 (with correspondence about moral decline among the marines, written by the navy chaplain to the Governor of Curaçao);<sup>25</sup> the archive of the Department of Public Health (with information about the way authorities dealt with venereal diseases);<sup>26</sup> and the archive of the former Governor of the Netherlands Antilles A.A.M. Struycken.<sup>27</sup>

The Catholic clergy was involved in the development of *Campo Alegre*.<sup>28</sup> The archives of the Catholic Church however do not hold any material about the brothel. There was only one letter from an anonymous friar.<sup>29</sup> The archive of the Commission of Protestant Churches in the East Indies and West Indies (1815-1958) was more useful.<sup>30</sup> There was no archival material available from Shell about *Campo Alegre*.

We used the archives of the League of Nations for the period before the Second World War and those of the United Nations for the period after the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> We also used 286 newspaper articles, mostly from the Catholic daily *Amigoe di Curaçao*, and the liberal *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten* for the territories of Curaçao and the Dutch Antilles.<sup>32</sup> 80 percent of the articles on *Campo Alegre* were about fights, drunkenness, and police action against the brothel. The remaining 20 percent were about policies and thus useful for this article. The useful articles were mostly published in June 1951, when a debate started about a *Campo* on Aruba. Both those in favour of regulation and those against used newspapers as a platform to voice their ideas and to protests. The newspaper articles made it possible to compare Curaçao with Aruba. There are few articles that describe *Campo* before 1950. *La Prensa* –

23. NA, Archive Ministry of Colonies: Governorate Journals Surinam and Curaçao, series A (MOC SA) no. 2.10.36.24.

24. NA, Archive Ministry of Justice, inventory of the department Legislation according to International Organizations 1946-1989 (MOJ) no. 2.09.84.

25. NA, Archive Ministry of Marine: Military Bodies and Parts in the Curaçao and Surinam Area 1934-1947 (MOM) no. 2.12.33.

26. NA, Archive Department of Public Health (1902)1918-1950(1976) (DPH) no. 2.15.37.

27. NA, Archive Collection 417 Struycken (C417) no. 2.21.217.

28. L. Dros, 'RK kerk stond aan de wieg bordeel', *Trouw*, 19 September 2008.

29. KDC, Archive A.T.W. Simons (ATWS) no. 398, inventory number 1115, shelf number 2501.

30. NA, Archive Committee of Protestant Churches in East-Indies and West-Indies 1815-1958 (CPEW) no. 2.10.12.

31. Archive League of Nations and the United Nations, Geneva, Annual reports 4715, 4685: 11b 14726 7285, 4670 11b 1768 931, 4670 11b 2306 931, 4670 11b 1955 931.

32. *Amigoe di Curaçao*: 130 articles, *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten* 149 articles. Other: 7 articles: *De Gelderlander* 4 November 1949, *La Prensa* 12 October 1949, *Het nieuws; algemeen dagblad (Suriname)* 28 December 1951, *Leeuwarder Courant* 24 December 1955, 15 March 1956, 28 November 1959, *Provinciaal Zeeuwse Courant* 8 May 1956.

a local Papiamentu newspaper – published an article about the brothel in 1949.<sup>33</sup> The Dutch press showed very little interest in the brothel.

### Campo Alegre

*Campo Alegre* was (and is) situated near Hato airport, a twenty minutes car drive north of Willemstad (the capital of Curaçao). The walled barrack camp can accommodate 100 prostitutes.<sup>34</sup> Each woman had her own apartment with a private entrance, and a bed and bathroom.<sup>35</sup> *Campo Alegre* also had a bar-restaurant-casino, a small shop, a clinic and an office. There was only one way into the camp, which was guarded. *Campo Alegre* looked like a self-supporting entity.<sup>36</sup>

**ILLUSTRATION 1** *Campo Alegre on Curaçao, 1963*



*The entrance of Campo Alegre. Photographed on the occasion of the clearance of North American personnel from the camp during the visit of a American destroyer to Curaçao in 1963. Collection: R. Ligthart. Collection Mariniersmuseum Rotterdam.*

33. *La Prensa* 12 October 1949.

34. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 189-190.

35. De Reus, *Geslachtsziekten op Curaçao*, 74.

36. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 190.

There were two types of prostitutes on the island before *Campo Alegre* was opened: local women, who were born on the island, and foreign prostitutes, who resided temporarily on the island.<sup>37</sup> According to police inspector Gorsira, as a rule there were about 90 foreign prostitutes on Curaçao, who stayed in four different hotels in Willemstad's district Punda.<sup>38</sup> The women found their clientele outside the hotel, because article 259 of the Dutch Criminal Code forbade prostitutes to work in hotels.<sup>39</sup> Business thrived on the streets.<sup>40</sup> Prostitutes took their clients by cab to an area called Marie Pompoen, just outside Willemstad.<sup>41</sup> In 1940, an army chaplain complained to the island Governor that the moral standard among the troops was falling. In his view, the troops had intercourse with 'women of the lowest sort'. The men stayed on the island for more than two years and this encouraged vice.<sup>42</sup> The chaplain emphasised the urgency of the issue and was convinced that the whole corps would go to hell if nobody acted soon.<sup>43</sup>

The Governor decided to set up a committee to fight prostitution and to stop the spread of venereal disease. The committee consisted of five people: three emissaries from the church, a doctor and a delegate from the governorate. On 14 October 1942, the commission presented its report, and advised to set up a registration program for prostitutes. Prostitutes were seen as a threat to public health, and the committee felt that the population of Curaçao needed to be protected. The report gave a detailed description of the moral damage to the population, especially to the women and children.<sup>44</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1944, a land ordinance was changed: a register was created in which every prostitute had to enrol. Foreign prostitutes were required to enrol within 24 hours of arriving on the island. Prostitutes were forced to visit a designated doctor every week for a medical examination.<sup>45</sup> There were also other reasons to press for change. In a police report, inspector Gorsira pointed out that Marie Pompoen was near the district Steenrijk. A new housing project would be built there shortly, and therefore prostitution at Marie Pompoen was no longer to be tolerated. Future residents would complain about fornication taking place in full view of their houses. According to Gorsira the solution

37. Martin, 'Hoe "Campo Alegre" ontstond', 30.

38. moc, inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284. Police report: 'completion people's homes Steenrijk'.

39. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 158.

40. Martin, 'Hoe "Campo Alegre" ontstond', 31-32.

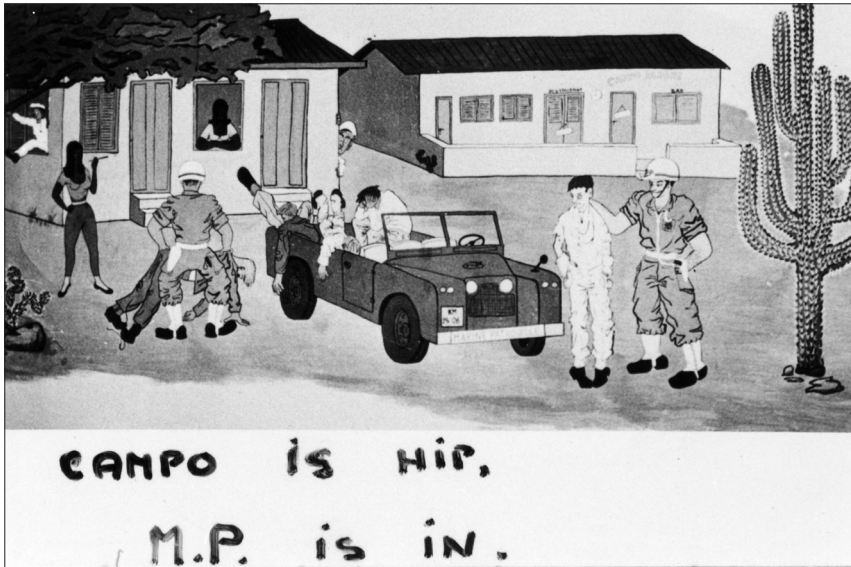
41. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284 letter Governor Peters 16 March 1950 to the Minister of Union Business and Overseas Territories in The Hague.

42. mom inv. 2.12.33, no. 61. Letter Army Chaplain J.B. van der Meer 6 April 1940 to the Governor of Curaçao.

43. mom inv. 2.12.33, no. 61, letter J.B. van der Meer 7 April 1940 to the Colonel/Head Army Chaplain Mgr. J.J.J. Noordman.

44. Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean*, 92.

45. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 164-165.

ILLUSTRATION 2 *Campo is hip, M.P. is in*

*Arrests of marines by the military police during visits at Campo prostitutes. It is a mural painting somewhere on Curaçao. The photograph dates back to the sixties.*

*Bron: Collectie Marine museum Rotterdam inv. no. 98322.*

was simple: deport all foreign prostitutes from the island. However, Gorsira knew that this would not solve the problem. The disadvantages were greater than the advantages. In his opinion, domestic prostitution would increase. The number of local prostitutes on the island had declined after the arrival of the foreign prostitutes, because clients found local prostitutes too black. Gorsira foresaw an increase in venereal diseases if the foreign prostitutes were expelled, because he believed local prostitutes were not very hygienic. Furthermore, 'honourable' Curaçao women would be harassed because there would not be enough public women left on the island. A shortage of prostitutes would also lead to an increase of, what Gorsira called, 'opportunity homosexuals'.<sup>46</sup>

The police report offered three solutions. The first one was restricting the admission of foreign prostitutes, while at the same time relocating prostitution to remote areas.<sup>47</sup> Solution number two was to house all foreign prostitutes in one or two buildings, which consisted of one-person apartments. The rent was to be decided by a committee and the building could have a restaurant and coffeehouse permit. The last suggestion was admission of a few foreign prostitutes, who would be given a six-month permit and would

46. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284, police report 'people's homes', 1.

47. moc inv 2.10.54 no 10284, police report 'people's homes', 6.

rent a house in the Punda area. The Punda could then be classified as a Red Light District. Solution number two was favoured. This led to the opening of *Campo Alegre*.<sup>48</sup>

The police found it efficient to have prostitution and related crimes concentrated in one place. The governorate believed that by doing so a whole district in Willemstad would be restored and open-air prostitution would disappear.<sup>49</sup> *Campo Alegre* also had legal advantages. As the women were housed in an apartment building, it could not be labelled a brothel. Each woman hired an apartment for her own use and left it when she left the island. Since the women paid rent per day they could be considered tourists. The proprietor could not interfere with what was happening inside the apartments. The building could not be called a brothel because for that definition to apply more than one woman needed to be housed in one room. In this construction it was also impossible to accuse the government of taking advantage of sexual immorality, authorities claimed.<sup>50</sup> Another advantage of *Campo Alegre* was that taxi drivers would again be able to carry decent citizens. Decent citizens would no longer be suspected of seeking the services of a prostitute when hailing a cab (before cabs were driving prostitutes and clients to and from Marie Pompoen). Better hygiene and medical check-ups would lead to fewer people being infected with venereal disease. The women's visits to the camp doctor were to be marked on their 'Pink card'.<sup>51</sup> The decision to start a state brothel was a major change in policy. It did not simply mean prostitutes were concentrated, and fenced-in. It meant Dutch authorities became directly responsible for their recruitment, organisation, control and management, while previously they were not. This led to the accusation by the UN that Dutch authorities were involved in trafficking.

Because *Campo* fell under the Department of Justice – controlled by the Curaçao police – the Dutch Attorney General consulted the police about the best location for the brothel. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1948, the Dutch Governor agreed to ordination number 5518. It gave Hugo Bakhuis the right to lease a lot of two hectares on the road to Seroe Fortuna. Hugo Bakhuis – nicknamed mister Wonderful – was born on Curaçao in 1916. He was a football player, played tennis at a high level (and organised the tournament for the Bakhuis Anniversary Cup), and organised drag races and horse races. He tried to set

48. Martin, 'Hoe "Campo Alegre" ontstond', 38-40.

49. MOC inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284, letter Governor Peters 16 March 1950 to the Minister of Union Business and Overseas Territories in The Hague.

50. Martin, 'Hoe "Campo Alegre" ontstond', 39.

51. Kempadoo, *Exotic colonies*, 173. The 'Pink Card' would impose mandatory medical check-up on the prostitutes practicing their trade in the city. It stressed that in a developing city, prostitution was inevitable and that the issuance of a 'Pink Card' would regulate prostitution and the diseases that went with it.

up a sport attraction park (Wonderful Sport Park), he built prefab houses and Wonderful Beach (a holiday resort). He was the director of a building material enterprise, owner of a gas station and a bus company (called the Bakhuis line). Bakhuis died in a car crash in 1973.<sup>52</sup>

The lease was for the period of 60 years, with a yearly rent of 0.03 cent per square meter. Bakhuis only paid 600 Antillean Guilders (NAfl) per land lot.<sup>53</sup> The lot would generate considerable income, as will be described below.<sup>54</sup> After the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1948, a license was granted to build twenty-five pavilions and a restaurant. *Campo Alegre* opened on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1949.<sup>55</sup> There are no indications of protests against the opening of *Campo Alegre* on Curaçao. Women who wanted to work in *Campo Alegre* needed to apply to Bakhuis. All women who worked in the camp came from abroad, mostly from Latin America. Their application needed to include a photograph. After Bakhuis' approval, the application was forwarded to the immigration department. If Bakhuis indicated a girl was going to work for him, the immigration department needed to grant her access to the island.<sup>56</sup> It was this construction that led Dutch authorities to be accused of acting as traffickers. They were allowing women to migrate as prostitutes and were facilitating this migration. The girls paid 10 NAfl rent per day for their apartment. Furthermore they paid 5 to 7.50 NAfl per day for their food. Cooking in the apartment was not allowed. They also needed to pay back their transport to the island, which came to 5 NAfl per day. Together with additional costs like medical care and transport to Willemstad, the daily costs for a *Campo Alegre* prostitute was 25 NAfl, to be paid to Bakhuis. *Campo Alegre* was usually fully occupied (100 women). This meant that the daily income for Bakhuis was 2500 NAfl and his yearly income 365,000 NAfl.<sup>57</sup>

The above-mentioned information was published anonymously in the daily newspaper *La Prensa* on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1949. *La Prensa* also wrote that because Bakhuis selected the women for *Campo Alegre*, very few dared to complain. When a woman complained, she lost her right to stay at the brothel, and on the island. *La Prensa* also claimed that there were always more than 100 prostitutes at the camp. They shared apartments. The women paid 10 NAfl per person per day, but only had salt water to bathe in. Dutch authorities replied to these complaints. The women were staying in a hotel room and

52. 'Hugo Bakhuis bij frontale botsing omgekomen', *Amigoe di Curacao* 11 May 1973; moc inv. 2.10.54 no. 10284, police report 'people's homes', 6.

53. In the Caribbean a land lot is a unit of measurement: 464 square meters.

54. moc SA inv. 2.10.36.24, no. 212 Governorate Journal from Curaçao 1948 1<sup>st</sup> part Governorate ordination number 5518.

55. De Reus, *Geslachtsziekten op Curaçao*, 42.

56. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284, police report 'people's homes'.

57. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 10284, article *La Prensa*, 'Campo Alegre of Concentratiekamp', 12 October 1949.

thus needed to follow the rules of the hotel. It was normal that there were no cooking facilities in a hotel room, and it was not allowed to bring in food from a different hotel. Authorities said that there were worries about the application process by Bakhuis, but they argued that his system of recruitment and admission had been approved.<sup>58</sup>

In 1965, the communist paper *Vitó* complained about Bakhuis' monopolistic position. Bakhuis was said to make 2000 NAfl per day. The Governor was strengthening Bakhuis' position, because all other nightlife on Curaçao had disappeared after *Campo Alegre* opened, *Vitó* wrote.<sup>59</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1949, the Dutch regional newspaper *De Gelderlander* pointed out that the *Curaçaose Post Spaarbank* – a Dutch state owned bank – financed *Campo Alegre*.<sup>60</sup> A letter from the governorate to the Minister of Justice in the Netherlands not only justified the financing of *Campo Alegre* with a loan from this bank, but also prostitution. Investors were not keen to be openly associated with prostitution. Therefore, once the governorate had decided to go ahead with *Campo Alegre*, the authorities felt obliged to finance the brothel, according to the Minister of Justice. The same letter said that the governorate was not planning to prosecute the proprietor of the brothel because he was not exploiting one. Bakhuis had a coffeehouse permit. Furthermore it could not be expected from the Dutch governorate to take any action against *Campo Alegre* because old practices might return.<sup>61</sup> The Governor was convinced that *Campo Alegre* was the best solution for Curaçao since open-air prostitution was worse.<sup>62</sup>

### A Campo Alegre on Aruba?

Developments on Curaçao led to debates about prostitution on Aruba, also part of the Netherlands Antilles. Aruba had a prostitution problem like Curaçao because of refinery Lago Oil, and the military camps. The prostitutes worked from hotels. Taxi-drivers took the women and their clientele to nearby Juana Morto.<sup>63</sup> In 1951 prostitution found its way onto the political agenda. Aruba also had to get a *Campo Alegre*, some argued. The Government-Council wanted to build an apartment building near Juana Morto. According to the

58. Ibidem, notes to the article 'Campo Alegre of Concentratiekamp'.

59. E. Zielinsky, 'Hotel Campo Alegre hoeren-exploitatie', *Vitó* 1:11 (1965) 3-4.

60. 'Latyns Amerikaanse 'dames' op Curaçao scheppen wantoestand.' *De Gelderlander*, 4 November 1949, 9.

61. MOC inv.2.10.54, no. 10284, secret archive, file number G9858, classification number 764.

62. MOC inv.2.10.54, no. 10284, letter Governor Peters 16 March 1950.

63. Alofs, 'Publieke dames', 22.

Governor, Dutch authorities were forced to do so for three reasons. In the first place they wanted to get rid of the horrible hotel in which the women were showcased. Secondly, schoolchildren acted as intermediaries between prostitutes and clientele. Finally, these schoolchildren hung back to watch the immoral acts. The Governor was of the opinion that Juana Morto was far enough from civilisation, and this was a location where prostitutes already worked.<sup>64</sup> This decision met with much opposition.

The clergy complained about falling moral, as the clergy on Curaçao had done, but in Aruba there was no request for regulation. On the contrary, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1951, the Dominican apostolic vicar Van der Veen Zeppenfeldt, originally from Aruba,<sup>65</sup> wrote a petition that was published in the *Amigoe di Curaçao*. Van der Veen apologised for his role in the establishment of *Campo Alegre* on Curaçao. In 1942 he had been on the committee and, as the representative of the Catholic Church, had endorsed the brothel. The circumstances on Curaçao were, however, very different from those on Aruba, he argued. The busy harbour of Curaçao during the war, and the large number of soldiers on the island, had been important reasons to open the brothel, Van der Veen pointed out. He was now of the opinion that it had not solved the problem. *Campo Alegre* attracted all sorts of evil that only made matters worse, and the risks of catching a venereal disease had not been reduced.<sup>66</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May the Governor responded by saying that the petition had been received.<sup>67</sup> However, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1951 the Dutch acting Governor, Jas, had already signed a land-ordinance that stipulated that a lease was to be given to Pereira and J.M. Debrot & co. for an area of 17,000 square meters. The lease came with a permit to build and exploit an apartment building.<sup>68</sup> It is remarkable that one year earlier Jas had held a very different opinion. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1951 he had declared in the *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* that *Campo Alegre* was a blemish on society. It may have had some benefits, but it was 'indefensible an evil of this time'.<sup>69</sup>

Plans for a *Campo* on Aruba led to fierce protests. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1951, the clergy in all churches on the island preached against the brothel plans. According to the clergy the decision regarding the brothel had already been taken, but it was not to be made public until after the upcoming elections.<sup>70</sup> The political opposition decided to call for an intervention. They used strong

64. 'Campo Alegre op Aruba en het Bestuur', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 6 April 1951, 3.

65. 'Mgr. A. v.d. Veen Zeppenfeldt. In overledene verliezen Ned. Antillen hun eerste eigen Bisschop en pater Dominikaan', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 5 July 1957, 1.

66. 'Verzoekschrift van Apostolisch Vicaris aan de Regeringsraad', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 28 May 1951, 1.

67. Ibidem.

68. Alofs, 'Publieke dames', 22-23.

69. 'Kroniek', *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 32:1 (1951) 53.

70. 'Aruba. Mededeling vanaf de preekstoel', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 28 May 1951, 2.

tropes and spoke about a brothel government, demagoguery and a policy that favoured pimps. After two years, it was clear to many that the experiment on Curaçao was a failure. The number of visitors to prostitutes had increased and the rise in the number of young homosexuals was staggering. Above all, it was a mystery to the opposition how the magistracy had accepted all this, completely in contradiction to the law.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, adversaries made use of local women as lobbyists for their case. A protest committee was founded and for two days, 2000 women protested in the streets of Oranjestad.<sup>72</sup> Curaçao's leading Dutch Catholic People's Party (KVP) answered via a newspaper article in *Beurs*. According to the party, the matter needed to be handled with utmost care but also with a sense of reality and objectivity. The KVP found the affair a matter of public moral and therefore felt it needed to be kept out of politics. They suggested that people who did interfere were only after political gain.<sup>73</sup>

Opponents of opening of a *Campo* on Aruba made use of religious arguments. One of them wrote in *Beurs* that he, nor his friends, had ever seen any of the immoral scenes about which the newspaper reported. In his view, the promotion of prostitution violated Gods Word, and Gods Law, and international law.<sup>74</sup> Proponents took a pragmatic stand. They claimed statistics showed that the chance of catching a venereal disease was four times higher in the case of illegal prostitution. They advised to build a less showy hotel and restrict the scandal as much as possible.<sup>75</sup>

Discussion about a *Campo* on Aruba took place at the time when the first Island-Council was to be elected.<sup>76</sup> Since the Antillean Islands had been colonised in the sixteenth century, they were governed through the Government Council, headed by a Dutch Governor on Curaçao. There were two political parties on Aruba that had political representation in the Government Council. The Aruban People's Party (AVP) held four seats, and the Partido Patriótico Arubana (PPA) held three seats. The majority of the AVP followers were locals, while supporters of the PPA were people who resided on Aruba because of the oil industry. Both parties can be regarded as liberal. Both were in favour of a *Campo* on Aruba. Furthermore there was the protestant Union Nacional

71. 'Volksvertegenwoordiging zet het mes in een maatschappelijke wonde. Regering geïnterpelleerd over Campo Alegre beleid', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 1 June 1951, 1.

72. 'Nieuws uit Aruba. Vrouwen betogen tegen Campo Alegre', *Het nieuws: algemeen dagblad*, 4 June 1951, 3.

73. 'Het debat over het Campo Alegre in de Staten. Commissie van advies dient als bliksemafleider', *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten*, 2 June 1951, 6.

74. 'Het Campo Alegre. Schandplek voor ons gebiedsdeel', *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten*, 5 June 1951, 6.

75. 'Nog enige woorden omtrent de kwestie der Campos Alegres', *Beurs en Nieuwsberichten*, 6 June 1951, 5.

76. Alofs, 'Publieke dames', 22-23.

Arubana (UNA I), and the catholic Union Nacional Arubana (UNA II). Neither of them was represented in the Government Council. In March 1951 the Island-Rule Netherland Antilles (ERNA) was introduced, which meant that every island was to have its own administration. Elections were to be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1951. There were 21 seats to be divided.<sup>77</sup>

The AVP was first in favour of a *Campo*, but changed its view when it became evident that many people were against a *Campo*, and against the AVP. Rumour had it that their foreman was a shareholder of the N.v. Pereira, and that Debrot had financed the AVP's political campaign.<sup>78</sup> AVP published a pamphlet in April 1951 stating that they thought they had only given permission for an innocent cabaret.<sup>79</sup> This statement might have helped the party during the elections. The AVP and PPA both won eight seats while UNA I got three seats and UNA II only two.

The aforementioned Governor Jas also changed sides, again. Although he had signed for the foundation of an apartment building on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1951, he now declared that measures needed to be taken to fight prostitution on Aruba. He did not want to regulate prostitution. He considered himself legally qualified and morally obliged to forbid an Aruban *Campo*, to halt the admission of new foreign prostitutes and to refuse extension of current permits. The new island administration would have to find a solution.<sup>80</sup> This did not mean that the influx of foreign prostitutes to Aruba stopped. A letter from the Dutch Governor to the Minister of Overseas Territories explains how these women continued to enter the island. As it was forbidden for local pimps to import foreign prostitutes, women entered the island as “*Animiermädels*” or nannies. They were immediately bonded by debt and unable to withdraw themselves from their creditors.<sup>81</sup>

## International complaints

As has been mentioned above, the start of *Campo Alegre* led to severe international criticism. Fighting prostitution was very much an international issue. International campaigns against prostitution and trafficking led to the Paris Conference and Convention of 1904.<sup>82</sup> The Netherlands was one of the twelve

77. [http://www.historiadiaruba.aw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=62](http://www.historiadiaruba.aw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=62) 18 September 2012.

78. ‘Politiek overpeinzing’, *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 28 May 1951, 3.

79. Alofs, ‘Publieke dames’, 25.

80. Ibidem, 25.

81. C417 inv. 2.21.217 no. 8 letter Governor to the Minister of Overseas Territories 21 December 1955.

82. M. Lehti and K. Aromaa, ‘Trafficking for sexual exploitation’, *Crime & Justice* 34 (2006) 133-227.

signatories.<sup>83</sup> A large number of other protocols and treaties followed.<sup>84</sup> In each case the Netherlands played an important role in campaigns, and signed the agreement. The Netherlands was one of the leaders in the international fight. In the 1930s the focus of The League of Nations shifted from Europe and the USA to Asia. The League of Nations started an investigation into prostitution in Asia. Reports were produced with numbers that were so large, about girls with ages so low, and atrocities so dreadful, that all previous Western reports paled in comparison.<sup>85</sup> Debates focussed on Hong Kong, but also touched on the Dutch East Indies. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1926, *De Indische Courant* (a local daily newspaper in the Dutch East Indies) wrote about Dutch-Indian girls who were sold into prostitution by their poverty stricken parents or widowed mothers.<sup>86</sup> These girls mostly had a Dutch father, and a so-called native mother. Because of their beauty the girls fetched a higher price than Chinese girls, according to *De Indische Courant*. The girls were sold in the Dutch East Indies, but some were brought to Bangkok, Singapore, Hejaz (currently Saudi Arabia), and Egypt. This international trade in girls was reason for extra worry. In 1933, Dutch newspapers reported that the League of Nations had named the Dutch East Indies as the largest market for the trade in women and children.<sup>87</sup> Dutch authorities were publically shamed by the League of Nations. The League of Nations organised an international conference on the topic in Bandung in 1937 to emphasise their point.

In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s more international treaties were concluded. The Netherlands did not sign the convention of 1950, although it had signed all previous conventions. The reason for not signing was *Campo Alegre*. The United Nations (UN) closely followed what was happening on Curaçao. The Dutch answers to UN questions regarding prostitution were very vague, but in the end the Dutch Governor answered that prostitution was not in fashion on Curaçao.<sup>88</sup> The UN explicitly did not share this view and pressed for measures.<sup>89</sup>

83. De Vries, “‘White Slaves’ in a colonial nation”; K. Leppänen, ‘International reorganisation and traffic in women. Venues of vulnerability and resistance’, *Lychnos* (2006) 110-128.

84. De Vries, “‘White Slaves’ in a colonial nation”; Lehti and Aromaa, ‘Trafficking for sexual exploitation’; J.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 (Winter: 2010) 90-113.

85. S. Chang, A colonial haunting: prostitution and the politics of sex trafficking in British India, 1917-1939. Ma Thesis The University of British Columbia (Vancouver 2012).

86. *De Indische Courant*, 9 July 1926.

87. *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant*, 17 October 1933.

88. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 4305, letter-telegram G.S. 3944 no. 1291 dated 25 July 1947 signed by P. Kasteel.

89. moJ inv. 2.09.84, no. 21. Report United Nations Economic and Social Council 26 March 1959 E/CN.5/338 *The Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the*

In 1947, the Netherlands had wanted to sign a new UN treaty. The Queen ratified Dr. van Royen, vicarious head of the Dutch Delegation, to sign the treaty.<sup>90</sup> It was rather remarkable that in the end the Dutch did not sign. A document in the archive of the Ministry of Justice discloses why. The UN wanted to change treaties closed in 1921, 1923 and 1933. The Soviet Union protested against these adjustments, probably because one of the changes was that the treaty would only apply to the so-called mother countries and not to their colonies or mandate territories.<sup>91</sup> The Soviet Union routinely objected to all things that might harm the colonies, and presented itself as the protector of countries on the brink of independence. Great Britain was also against change, because in their view the removed articles made it possible to pursue an independent policy in dependent territories. Great Britain filed an amendment for replacement of the removed articles. Furthermore, it suggested including a *Colonial Application Clause*. This meant that the colonies and mandate territories had a choice: they could decide whether the treaty applied to them or not, and notify the mother country about their decision. The Netherlands had voted in favour of the British amendment, but it was rejected.<sup>92</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs saw major problems in ratifying the new treaty because it would put the Netherlands in an awkward position. After the removal of the Colonial Application Clause and the modification of article 23 it now read: 'for the purpose of the present Convention the word "State" shall include all the Colonies and trust territories of a State signatory or acceding to the Convention and all territories for which such a State is internationally responsible'.<sup>93</sup> Article 6 said that each ratifying country agreed 'to take all necessary measures to repeal or abolish any existing law, regulation or administrative provision by virtue of which persons who are engaged in, or suspected of engaging in prostitution are subject either to special registration or to the possession of a special document or to any exceptional requirements for supervision or notification'.<sup>94</sup> If the Dutch signed, the land ordinance of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1944 would have to be withdrawn. It was not the only compromising article. Article 2 would bring the Netherlands into serious criminal and legal trouble. It forbade all kinds of state involvement with a

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*Prostitution of Others*, 3-4.

90. MOK inv.2.10.54, no. 4307, letter C.A. Kluyver Ministry of Foreign Affairs section Political Affairs VN, no 91307, 9 October 1947.

91. MOC inv. 2.10.54, no. 4307, letter undated and not signed.

92. Ibidem.

93. MOC inv. 2.10.54, no. 4307, letter Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18 February 1950 to the Management International Organizations Bureau Economic and Social Affairs no 15949.

94. United Nations General Assembly A/1164 30 November 1949, Draft Convention for the suppression of the traffic of persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others page 4 article 6.

brothel. The Dutch would violate the article if the convention were ratified because precisely this was daily business for the proprietor of *Campo Alegre*, with consent of the Dutch government.<sup>95</sup> Articles 8 until 12 said that persons who were guilty of exploitation of prostitution could be extradited. This meant that the Dutch state would have to prosecute itself as well as Bakhuis. Dutch authorities had provided the location for *Campo Alegre* and had funded the brothel. They had arranged for the regulation and registration of the prostitutes, which was forbidden in article 13 and 14. Article 15 prescribed the way in which government services fighting prostitution should be arranged.<sup>96</sup> In a letter, dated 17 May 1950, the governorate made clear that it would continue to support the brothel because otherwise old abuses would return.<sup>97</sup> Already in 1947, the Governor wrote that the presence of the bachelor camps that housed thousands of single men made it necessary to protect women on Curaçao, and thus to maintain a contingent of foreign prostitutes on the island. Registration, regulation and periodic examination were necessary.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, during the Cold War, Curaçao was strategically placed between politically instable countries such as Cuba and Venezuela. The presence of the military was of great importance to the Dutch, and to others, the Governor emphasised.

After the Dutch made certain that Great Britain would not ratify the Convention, they decided not to sign either. In a letter, dated 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1950, the Dutch Minister for Union Business and Overseas Territories wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Convention was unacceptable with regards to the Netherlands Antilles. Since the Convention held provisions that required abolishment of prostitution and forbade regulation, he advised not to ratify the treaty.<sup>99</sup>

In 1954, the UN reported – based on information they received from the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations – that on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1949 police records showed there were 230 registered local prostitutes on Curaçao and 1636 foreign prostitutes 'imported through the white slave traffic'. Among the first group, there were 32 minors between 14 and 20 years of age, including 8 who were 14 or 15 years of age.<sup>100</sup> According to the

95. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 4307 letter governorate of Curaçao to the Minister of Union Business and Foreign territories 17 May 1950, no. 2261/209.

96. moc inv. 2.10.54 no. 4307 letter Minister of Justice J.H. van Maarseveen 21 November 1947.

97. moc inv. 2.10.54, no. 4307 letter governorate of Curaçao 17 May 1950 no. 2261/209.

98. moc inv. 2.10.54 no. 4307 letter P. Kasteel 7 November 1947 to the Ministry of Overseas Territories.

99. moc inv.2.10.54 no. 4307 letter Minister of Union Business and Overseas Territories to the Minister of Foreign Affairs subject draft convention UN 26 June 1950.

100. UN Economic and Social Council. Slavery, Supplementary report submitted by the Secretary General 26 February 1954, 64.

Dutch Minister of Overseas Territories this was not true. To his knowledge the women came voluntarily to the Netherlands Antilles. He demanded a rectification.<sup>101</sup> The UN however reprimanded the Netherlands. Other countries had experienced problems and had seen an increase in prostitution during the Second World War. For Ghana, for instance, it was reported that ‘the influx of military and air-force personnel particularly of the Allied Forces at Accra has led to a great increase in the prostitution and soliciting for that purpose. The prostitutes are accompanied by “pilot boys” who attract the attention of the soldiers or lead them to the prostitutes many of whom operate in streets adjacent to clubs, dance halls, etc.’ However, for Ghana police action was reported as a response, not state organised prostitution. The Netherlands and its solution on Curaçao clearly stood out in the 1954 UN report.<sup>102</sup>

### Current situation

*Campo Alegre* still exists, and is now also known under the name *Le Mirage*. It is still in the hands of the Bakhuis family. Since 1949, 25,000 women have worked in the brothel. In the past, they came from Cuba and Venezuela. Currently they come from the Dominican Republic and Colombia. They ask for a permit to work in a hotel. The selection of prostitutes is done by a female administrator attached to the Vice and Morals Police department. In 1993, 250 women per month sent a letter of application, and 35 to 40 were selected. There is prostitution outside the brothel, in smaller brothels, in hotels and on the street. The sex trade intertwines with the drug trade.<sup>103</sup>

Political involvement with moral issues fills the headlines of newspapers almost every day. *Amigoe* published 551 articles about *Campo Alegre* between 1950 and 1999, mostly about crimes taking place in the camp. Recently *Campo* manager and grandson of Bakhuis, Giovanni van Ierland and *Campo* attorney Leslie Franklin were found guilty of money laundering and drug trafficking.<sup>104</sup> Dutch attorney Bram Zeegers and the later murdered Dutch real estate magnate Willem Endstra were mentioned as fellow perpetrators.<sup>105</sup> While Van Ierland and Franklin were in prison, several political leaders were accused of forgery, accepting bribes and involvement in a criminal organisation. Several members of the Van Ierland family came under suspicion

101. MOC inv. 2.10.54 secret archive G9858 Ministry of overseas Territories 23 June 1954.

102. UN Economic and social council, seventeenth session SLAVERY supplementary report submitted by the Secretary-General E/2548 28 February 1954.

103. Kempadoo, ‘Prostitution, marginality and empowerment’, 70.

104. W. Tielkemeijer, *Coup Campo Alegre* (Willemstad 2011) 15-16.

105. ‘Omstreden bordeeleigenaar Curaçao doodgeschoten’, *De Telegraaf*, 28 January 2009.

as well.<sup>106</sup> All the accused were acquitted.<sup>107</sup> Shortly after Van Ierland was released from prison in 2009, he was murdered.<sup>108</sup> According to many residents of Curaçao, criminal aspects had penetrated into the highest echelons of ‘the banana republic’.<sup>109</sup> In the long run, *Campo Alegre* did not solve any problem. Nobody, however, pressed for change.

The 2011 *American Trafficking in Persons* report explicitly mentions Curaçao as a transit route for trafficking in women, men and children.<sup>110</sup> For decades now, *Campo Alegre* is mentioned as a brothel via which women end up in prostitution in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe.<sup>111</sup> Newspapers call it a transit house and a smuggling route.<sup>112</sup> The Netherlands, which still stands out as one of the countries that actively tries to fight trafficking and prostitution, continues to be reprimanded and publicly shamed. In 2009, the US State Department gave the Netherlands the highest Tier ranking for its attempts to stamp out trafficking on their continental territory. The Netherlands Antilles, however, were put on the Tier II Watch List. It is an indication that the USA State Department is continuously worried about what is happening on the islands and feels Dutch authorities are failing.

In 2005 the disappearance of Natalee Holloway – an American student who was on Aruba for a high school graduation trip – increased debates about prostitution and trafficking on the islands.<sup>113</sup> Her disappearance had nothing to do with either, but the media did speculate for a while that she must have fallen prey to traffickers. In the USA, organisations called for a tourist boycott of the Netherlands Antilles as holiday islands for US students on graduation trips and spring breaks. US authorities used the threat of a tourist boycott to pressure Dutch authorities into action regarding prostitution and trafficking. Dutch authorities gave money to study the problem, gave public lectures to raise awareness, created a trafficking hotline, and set up a facebook page. These were all highly visible steps. Dutch authorities also changed the legal status of the islands so that they would no longer fall under the anti-traffic-

106. ‘Campo II op zitting’, *Antilliaans Dagblad*, 7 January 2005, 1.

107. ‘Ys aan de tand gevoeld. Staten zet premier in de hoek’, *Antilliaans Dagblad*, 4 March 2005, 1.

108. ‘Omstreden bordeeleigenaar Curaçao doodgeschoten’, *De Telegraaf*, 28 January 2009.

109. ‘Balans’, *Antilliaans Dagblad*, 21 August 2012, 8.

110. ‘Eilanden doen te weinig tegen mensensmokkel’, *ANP*, 23 June 2011.

111. United Nations, *Consejo Económico y Social, Comisión de Derechos Humanos. Informe de la Relatora Especial, Sra. Radica Coomaraswamy Sobre la Violencia Contra la Mujer, con Inclusión de sus Causas y Consecuencias*, February 12, 1997 (Geneva 1997) 30.

112. ‘RK kerk stond aan wieg bordeel’, *Trouw*, 20 September 2008.

113. H.M. Smith-Cannoy and C.A. Smith, ‘Human trafficking and international cheap talk: the Dutch government and the Island Territories’, *Journal of Human Rights* 11:1 (2012) 51-65.

ing laws to which Dutch authorities had agreed. It made all other measures window dressing.<sup>114</sup>

## Conclusion

The leading question of this article was why Dutch authorities decided to start a state brothel on Curaçao. Dutch authorities used legal arguments (Campo was a hotel, not a brothel), doom scenarios (the alternative was worse; decent women would be assaulted; local women would turn to prostitution; homosexuality would increase), economic arguments (the oil industry) and a Cold War argument (the military was needed in this politically instable region). The decision was surprising and it was a sharp change in policy. On the one hand, the decision did not change much: prostitution continued, and so did the problems associated with it. On the other hand changes were far reaching. A large part of the prostitutes – all foreign – were concentrated and fenced-in. More importantly, Dutch authorities became responsible for the recruitment, admittance and control of the prostitutes. From an international perspective this was extremely uncommon. It led to severe criticism from the UN and made it impossible for the Netherlands to sign treaties against trafficking from 1949 onwards. The criticism did not lead to a reversal of the decision. However, it led to debates on Aruba, which did not get a state brothel as a result.

In our section on theory we listed six factors that can explain why policies change according to the literature:

- 1 Pressure from (international) organisations (such as the UN) in combination with comparisons to other countries. In the Curaçao case there was severe international pressure: the Netherlands was publically shamed by the UN repeatedly, and was already shamed by the League of Nations prior to the decision. This criticism did not wane in later years, and Curaçao was described as a clearing-house through which Latin American prostitutes reached Europe.
- 2 Changes in the balance of power (i.e. outcome of elections). On Curaçao there was no shift in the balance of power, but on Aruba there was. The upcoming elections on Aruba and the failure of the Curaçao brothel explain why no state brothel was opened on Aruba. On Aruba, a time lag effect occurred: authorities on Aruba could see how policies on Curaçao had failed.
- 3 Changes in numbers (i.e. number of prostitutes, number of people with a sexual transmitted disease). There was a lot of debate about changes in

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<sup>114</sup>Smith-Cannoy and Smith, 'Human trafficking and international cheap talk'.

numbers: increases in the number of prostitutes and the spread of venereal disease. These were reason for starting the state brothel. Failure to decrease the numbers was no reason for closing it.

- 4 Economic changes. There were economic factors at play in the decision-making. The oil industry was important to the island and its employees were the prostitutes' clients. Bakhuis was an important entrepreneur with a lot of influence. When the oil industry collapsed it was replaced by tourism, part of which was sex-tourism.
- 5 Precedents and policy legacies. There were very few precedents. Japan during the Second World War was the only other example of a state brothel, and this was hardly an example to follow.
- 6 The effect of sudden events and highly publicised and dramatised stories. The Natalee Holloway case did lead to severe pressure from the USA. It did not lead to closure of the brothel, but it did lead to a change in the legal status of the islands.

Overall, it appears that economic interests in keeping the brothel open trumped all other factors, including international pressure on closing it.

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