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HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Elena S. Korchmina

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*Elena S. Korchmina*¹

‘LUXURY’ AS THE PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT OF THE RUSSIAN EMPERORS AND EMPRESSES: THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT IN THE 18TH CENTURY²

Luxury has always been an intrinsic part of world history, but only in the 18th century the core of this phenomenon came up for discussion in Europe. During these debates the concept of luxury was gradually demoralized by economic liberalism and reshaped as “modern and more objective economic concept”. Eventually the concept of luxury became a universal concept with the only commonly accepted meaning (Sekora). A seminal role in this process played translations, as far as for the continental translators of the key writings “there was no need to invent an entirely new vocabulary of political economy or of cultural practice...” (Reinert). Thus, European thinkers coordinated their positions even if they disagreed with each other. But, how had the notion of luxury been conceptualizing outside of the European Roman world? Russia is an interesting example raising some intellectual puzzles. First of all, it was a relatively backward country, where luxury per se was the essential part of national self-representation. This contradiction caused the real economic problems of indebtedness. One way of fixing it up was the introduction of sumptuary laws which became an important channel of defining the concept of luxury. Secondly, starting from Petrine time Russia got more acquainted with the European political economy masterpieces, translating and adopting them. But “translators lost the security of compatibility when they turned to extra-European languages and traditions” (Reinert). How did Russian translators accomplish the task of describing such a relatively new phenomenon as luxury? By the 1760s, as a result of two processes of the development of legislation and translation the European writings starting the concept of luxury became not an economic term on a large scale, as in European tradition, but a pedagogical project, when the subjects had to acquire mostly the unwritten rules of permissible levels of luxury.

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¹ National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia). Faculty of Humanities. Senior Research Fellow; E-mail: e.korchmina@gmail.com

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Introduction

Luxury has always been an intrinsic part of world history³, but the words '*luxe*'/'*luxury*' in the conventional sense are quite new, entering the French and English languages only in the 17th century.⁴ It was in no way fortuitous that it was only at the end of the 17th century that the core of this phenomenon came up for discussion in Europe⁵ against a backdrop of development of international trade and incipient economic growth⁶. During these debates the concept of luxury was gradually demoralized by economic liberalism and reshaped as a "modern and more objective economic concept"⁷. A seminal role in the defining of the concept of luxury was played by translations or, as Sophus Reinert puts it, "emulations", in so far as for the continental translators of key writings "there was no need to invent an entirely new vocabulary of political economy or of cultural practice..."⁸ Thus, European thinkers coordinated their positions even if they disagreed with each other. Eventually the concept of luxury became a universal concept with a sole commonly accepted meaning⁹. Nowadays 'luxury' is defined as "a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense", designating a thing (things) which is expensive or difficult to obtain, a rarely obtained pleasure¹⁰. But how was the notion of luxury conceptualized outside the European Roman world?

Russia is an interesting example raising some questions.

First of all, it was a relatively backward country,¹¹ where luxury per se was an essential part of the "imperial imaginary"¹². This contradiction caused real economic problems of indebtedness both at the state and the private level.¹³ One way of fixing it was the introduction of sumptuary laws which became an important tool in defining the concept of luxury. On the basis of the ideas of a well-known Russian scholar, Viktor Zhivov, concerning the Russian legislature in general, I consider sumptuary laws as part of a polemical struggle, when rulers preferred political posturing rather than practical reasoning.¹⁴ Thus, the investigation of the sumptuary laws in Russia is believed to reveal one of the ways of defining the concept of luxury.

Secondly, starting from the middle of the 17th century, and especially from Petrine times, Russia became increasingly acquainted with European works of political economy, translating

³ Sekora, J., 1977, *Luxury. The concept in western thought, Eden to Smollett*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p. 51.

⁴ Jennings, J., 2007, „The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought“, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 79-105.

⁵ Shovlin, J., 2006, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism and the Origins of the French Revolution*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.

⁶ Allen, R.C., 2009, *The British Industrial in Global Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁷ Scott, A.V., 2015, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury in Early Modern England*, ASHGATE, UK, p. 5.

⁸ Reinert, S.A., 2011, *Translating Empire. Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy*, Harvard University Press, London, p. 65.

⁹ Sekora, J., 1977, *Luxury*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Definition of luxury, Merriam-Webster, [Lexico Oxford, Cambridge, Collins Dictionaries](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/luxury), viewed 18 July 2019, <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/luxury>>, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/luxury>>, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/luxury>>, <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/luxury>>.

¹¹ Kollmann, N.S., 2017, *The Russian Empire 1450-1801*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 189-204; Hellie, R., 1999, *The Economy and Material Culture of Russia*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, p. 627; Marasinova, E.N., 2008, *Vlast i Lichnost: ocherki russkoi istorii XVIII veka*, Nauka, Moscow, p. 249.

¹² The term was introduced by Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper. See: Kollman, *The Russian Empire*, p. 129. For the luxury of Russian courts and the nobility. See: Hellie, *The Economy and Material Culture of Russia*, p. 177.

¹³ See example: Sherbatov, M.M., 2010, *O povrezdenii npravov v Rossii*, in *Izbrannye Trudy, Rossijskaya politicheskaya enciklopediya*, Moscow.

¹⁴ Zhivov, V.M., 2002, *Razyskaniya v oblasti istorii i predistorii russloi literature*, Moscow, p. 278.

and adapting them. But “translators lost the security of compatibility when they turned to extra-European languages and traditions”¹⁵. How did Russian translators accomplish the task of describing such a relatively new phenomenon as luxury? Did they accept transliteration or search for a Russian equivalent? How did they fill a vague new term with different implications? Translations caused obvious difficulties; coping with them, translators defined the new concept. This process constituted another channel in defining the concept of luxury.

As a result, by the 1760s the concept became not only an economic term, as in the European tradition, but a pedagogical project, in which the subjects were invited to acquire the mostly unwritten rules of the permissible level of luxury. The deeply-rooted vagueness of this notion influenced the legislature in the second half of the 18th century and later. The legislator did not intend to punish subjects for non-compliance with sumptuary laws which remained mere wishes of the monarch; the circle of luxury goods varied, extending or shrinking at the mercy of the monarch. But despite all these peculiarities, nowadays in Russian the definition of the notion of luxury is quite similar to that in English and in French.¹⁶

Partly accepting the warning of John Sekora about the linearity of conceptualizing the notion of luxury, I plan to investigate the early part of this process, the process of searching for the meaning of the new concept.

My article will fall into three parts. In the first part the landmarks of the development of the term *roskosh* (‘luxury’) in the first half of the century will be indicated. The second part is devoted to the history of Russian sumptuary laws till the late 1750s. I will show how the legislator tried to sketch what luxury was. In the third part I will answer the questions as to when and why the concept of luxury entered the Russian sumptuary laws and what changes it caused.

The history of the concept of *roskosh* (‘luxury’) in Russia till the late 1750s

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the notion of *roskosh* (‘luxury’) drifted from primarily a moral and esthetic category to a concept imbued with a variety of connotations, especially economic ones. It was not a linear process, but the trend is noticeable.

The origin of the Russian word *roskosh* (‘luxury’) is our baseline. It originated from the Polish word ‘*rozkosz*’ which in Polish meant ‘delight’ and ‘pleasure’.¹⁷ This implication of the word was naturalized in Russian in the late sixteenth - seventeenth centuries,¹⁸ but “meanwhile in the seventeenth century it was placed in the dictionaries (*azbukovnik*) with a field label ‘Polish’”.¹⁹ The linguist, Max Vasmer (Fasmer) pointed out that “the tradition, entrenched in the Russian language, is associated with the use of the word *roskosh* (‘luxury’), which reflects more hedonistic pleasures and feelings than economic content (the word ‘luxus’).”²⁰ In the 1720s, the suggestion of *roskosh* (‘luxury’) as something negative, corrupted morals and excess of feelings,

¹⁵ Reinert, S.A., 2011, *Translating Empire*, p. 65.

¹⁶ Dal’, *Tolkovyi slovar’ zhivogo velikorusskogo yazika*, viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://slovardalja.net/word.php?wordid=36776>>; Ozhegov, *Tolkovyi Slovar’*, viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://slovarozhegova.ru/word.php?wordid=27322>>; Efremova, *Novyi slovar’ russkogo yazika*, viewed 18 July 2019, <<https://www.efremova.info/word/roskosh.html>>. WomnRRNub-Y.

¹⁷ In the last decades of the 17th century the dominant language of translation became Polish. Zhivov, V.M., 2002, *Razyskaniya v oblasti istorii i predistorii russloi literature*, Moscow, pp. 264-5.

¹⁸ Nikolaev, S.I., 2004, *Ot Kokhanovskogo do Mitskevicha. Razyskaniya po istorii polsko-russkikh literaturnykh svyazei XVII – pervoi treti XIX v.*, Saint Petersburg, pp. 172–3.

¹⁹ *Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII*, Vol. 22, Nauka, Moscow, 1997, p. 214.

²⁰ *Etimologicheskii slovar russkogo yazyka: v 4 tomakh*, Vol. 3, Saint Petersburg, 1996, p. 504.

lack of modesty and moderation was widespread.²¹ But around the 1740s at least two Russian scholars, the encyclopedist Mikhail Lomonosov and the historian Vasilii Tatishchev started using it in an economic sense.²² And for the second half of the eighteenth century a famous Russian historian of culture, the philologist, Grigorii Gukovskii, showed the widespread use of this word in the Russian language both in moral and economic contexts. Thus, starting from the 1730s the word *roskosh* ('luxury') was coopting economic implications in addition to basic moral and aesthetic meanings. It became possible primarily because in Russian there were no "rivals" to the word; under "rivals" I mean other words describing economic problems related to the consumption and overconsumption of expensive goods.

Rivals to the word 'roskosh' ('luxury')

In Russian there were not many words defining the problem of overconsumption. To my mind this could, to a large extent, be explained by the general state of the economy: the majority of Russians lived at subsistence level, so they could not spend money on imported or expensive goods.²³ But there was a very narrow group of influential and wealthy people, who were given to luxury (e.g. Boris Ivanovich Morozov, Mikhail Ignatievich Tatishchev, Vasilii Vasilievich Golitsyn)²⁴. Thus, there could be some potential substitutes or synonyms for the word *roskosh* ('luxury').

The most obvious substitute could be the word (the transliteration) *luxe* ('luxus' or 'luxe'), a word with an economic meaning²⁵. It could enter Russian through either the Latin or (and) French writings²⁶, which were being translated at the outset of the 18th century. But we did not come across any examples of its usage in the first half of the 18th century. Ksenia Borderioux argues that the word *luxe* ('luxe') existed in Russian eighteenth-century language²⁷ but, as far as the dictionaries of the eighteenth-century pointed out, its was used only towards the end of the century²⁸. Thus, we can say with certainty that *luxe* ('luxe') appeared in the Russian language only towards the end of the century probably under the influence of French²⁹. Despite the fact that this word had an economic meaning it could not be a rival to the word *roskosh* ('luxury'), because it appeared after the latter had already become a concept with economic connotations.

Another possible competitor for the word *roskosh* ('luxury') was the old Russian word *izlishestva* ('excesses'). It was widespread,³⁰ and the legislator used it actively. It is interesting that in sumptuary laws in Britain³¹ and in France, the same words (excesses, superfluity) were used to describe the threat of overconsumption, but the notion of 'luxury' was being

²¹ See: Puffendorf, S., 1726, O dolzhnosti cheloveka I grazhdanina po zakonu estestvennomu. Kniga pervaya.

²² Lomonosov, M.V., 1741, O sokhraneni zdraviya [perevod]; Lomonosov, MV 1748, Kratkoe rukovodstvo k krasnorechiiu, ili Ritorika; Tatishchev, VN 1742, Kratkoe ekonomicheskoe do derevni sleduyushchie zapiski.

²³ See: Hellie, R 1999, The Economy and Material Culture of Russia, 1600-1725, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 628-45.

²⁴ Hellie, R., 1999, The Economy and Material Culture of Russia, pp. 571-627.

²⁵ Etimologicheskii slovar russkogo yazyka. Vol. 3, p. 504.

²⁶ See: Puffendorf, S., 1688, De Jure and Naturae et Gentium; or François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon 1793, Les aventures de Télémaque fils d'Ulysse, Edinbourg, pp. M,DCC,XCIII.

²⁷ Borderioux, K., 2016, Platie Imperatritsy Ekateriny II I evropeiskii kostum v Rossiskoi Imperii, NLO, Moscow, p. 238.

²⁸ In the dictionaries of the seventeenth century this word is not found.

²⁹ Slovar' russkogo yazyka XVIII veka, viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://feb-web.ru/feb/sl18/slov-abc/>>.

³⁰ Pososhkov, I 1951, On Poverty and Wealth, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moscow, pp. 128, 130.

³¹ Secara, M (ed.), Elizabethan Sumptuary Statutes, viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://elizabethan.org/sumptuary/>>.

conceptualized through relatively new words (*roskosh*, *luxury*, *luxe*) both in Europe and in Russia.

All the other examples of “rivals” could be divided tentatively speaking into two groups: with more negative or more positive connotations.

The first group could include such words as *koryst* (‘seeking lucre’)³², *slasti or sladosti* (‘pleasures’)³³, *blesk prokazheniya* (‘shine of leprosy’)³⁴, *slava or khvasti*³⁵ (‘vanity’, ‘boasting’)³⁶. The writers used these words to describe the moral leprosy that appeared as a result of the consumption of dangerous luxury goods, for example “*egda pogibe slast’mi obladannyi v ade pogruzhen*” (when you are ruined by pleasures).³⁷ The semantic fields of these notions were tightly bound to religious implications. These words were quite popular in the first decades of the 18th century and earlier, but they were rarely used in the debates about luxury later.

The second group of “rivals” implied admiration of represented wealth and splendor: *bogatstvo* (‘wealth’), *velikolepie* (‘splendidness’)³⁸, *izobilie* (‘abundance’)³⁹, *pysnyi* (‘magnificent’).⁴⁰ These words reflected the visual environment of power, demonstrated what took the subjects’ breath away.

By the first decades of the 18th century, all “rival-concepts” were already included in familiar, established semantic networks; they were hardly useful or appropriate for new debates and the conceptualization of a new phenomenon. A new word and concept were necessary, and it may be not by accident that the conventionally foreign word *roskosh* (‘luxury’)⁴¹ was used, and initially it was more often met in translations than in original Russian writings; we can for example compare more than fifty tokens in Andrei Krushev’s translation versus only three times in Ivan Pososhkov’s “On poverty and Wealth”⁴² which were written around the same time.

The influence of translations

One of the most influential and popular works of the eighteenth century was the Russian translation of “The Adventures of Telemachus” (1724), a French Roman Catholic archbishop Francois Fenelon’s political novel⁴³, where the concept of luxury is one of the key notions. This book was likely to be included in the reading of those who took the most direct part in the formation of political language, including writing laws. In order to better understand the nuances of the Russian translation of 1724, made by Andrei Khrushchev⁴⁴, I compare it with an English

³² I thank Adrian Selin for his suggestions.

³³ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 25, Nauka, Moscow, 2000, pp. 68, 73.

³⁴ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 1, Nauka, Moscow, 1975, pp. 237.

³⁵ The last word is very popular: Pososhkov, On Poverty and Wealth, p. 127

³⁶ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 25, p. 55.

³⁷ Piesa Uzhasnaya izmena, 1701, viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://klintsy.org/79-raznoe/86-a-s-djomin/>>.

³⁸ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 7, Nauka, Moscow, 1980, pp. 65-66.

³⁹ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 6, Nauka, Moscow, 1979, p. 191.

⁴⁰ Slovar’ Russkogo Yazyka XI-XVII, Vol. 21, Nauka, Moscow, 1995, p. 86. At that time there was not a noun ‘magnificence’.

⁴¹ Nikolaev, S.I., 2004, Ot Kokhanovskogo do Mitskevicha. Razyskaniya po istorii polsko-russkikh literaturnykh svyazei XVII – pervoi treti XIX v., Saint Petersburg, pp. 172-3.

⁴² Pososhkov, I., 1951, On Poverty and Wealth, pp. 26, 133-4.

⁴³ Bugrov, K. and Kiselev, M., 2016, Natural Law and Virtue. The integration of European Influence into 18th century Russian Political Culture, Ural University Press, Ekaterinburg, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Kruglov, V.M., (ed.) 2011, F. Fenelon, Pokhozdeniya Telemaka. Russkii rukopisnyi perevod 1724 goda, Nestor Istoriya, Saint Petersburg.

translation made around this time by an Englishman, John Ozell.⁴⁵ In Britain there had already been an active debate about luxury and the concept itself was better formed. To avoid confusion using the concept of luxury I shall use the following words : in Russian it will be ‘roskosh’, in English - ‘luxury’, and in French - ‘luxe’⁴⁶.

The comparison of the Russian and the English translations shows that for Khrushchev the notion of luxury was quite new and amorphous unlike for the English translator, as is clearly manifested in the following passages. First, describing the island of Crete, Fenelon wrote : “Pour le faste et la mollesse, on n'a jamais de soin de les réprimer; car ils sont inconnus en Crete...”⁴⁷ Khrushchev translated this phrase almost verbatim: “Роскоши и сластолюбие без наказания оставлены, ибо того в Крите не знали”⁴⁸. In his turn, Ozell conceptualized the original “without punishment” into the notion of sumptuary laws. “As for sumptuary laws for suppressing Luxury and Extravagancy they have no need thereof, the Cretans being utter strangers to those vices...”⁴⁹. In England by the beginning of the eighteenth century the sumptuary laws had existed for a long time, which is why Ozell easily saw the core idea of the limitation of luxury consumption.

The second case demonstrating the translators’ level of knowledge about luxury describes temporality in the well-known monologue “O, Telemachus”. Fenelon wrote that luxury goods are those things that people did not know 30 years before (“des choses qu'on ne connaissait point trente ans auparavant”). Khrushchev translated this passage without indicating any precise time («На всяк день новые нужды находят и не могут без таких вещей жить, которых прежде не знали»)⁵⁰. Ozell rendered it directly that “people can no longer subsist without things, which thirty years before had not even been heard of”.⁵¹ Thus, the image of the complexity of the problem was not yet formed at that time in Russian society, unlike in English or French society.

Luxury was a quite new phenomenon in Russia in the first decades of the eighteenth century, which is why the translator had plenty of freedom to think about words describing luxury in the closest way. And as we stated earlier it is unlikely that, for a new phenomenon, he chose by chance a conventionally foreign word *roskosh*.

What French words were translated into Russian as ‘roskosh’, and into English as ‘luxury’?

Several French words and the corresponding adjectives were translated into Russian by the word *roskosh*. Here is a list of these words in decreasing order: *faste*, *luxe*⁵², *délices*, *vaine délicatesse*, *profusion*. Khrushchev was free to choose in each case how to translate. Both Khrushchev and Ozell always rendered ‘luxe’ as ‘roskosh’ and ‘luxury’ correspondingly. But

⁴⁵ François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, The adventures of Telemachus the son of Ulysses. In twenty-four books, Archbishop of Cambrai, London Done from the new edition just printed in Paris, 1719.

⁴⁶ François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, Les aventures de Télémaque fils d'Ulysse. Par M. de Fénelon, archevêque de Cambrai Edinburgh, M, DCC, XCIII, 1793, p. 399.

⁴⁷ Fénelon, Les aventures de Télémaque fils d'Ulysse, p. 65

⁴⁸ Fenelon, Pokhozdeniya Telemaka, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁹ Fénelon, The adventures of Telemachus the son of Ulysses, p. 91.

⁵⁰ Fenelon, Pokhozdeniya Telemaka, p. 297.

⁵¹ Fénelon, The adventures of Telemachus the son of Ulysses, p. 232.

⁵² The word ‘le faste’ is about twice as likely to be used in the French text itself as the word ‘le luxe’

Khrushchev more often translated *'faste'* as *'roskosh'* than the English translator did.⁵³ Moreover, as a rule Ozell used either several words ('vain pomp') or such words as *'pride'*, *'vanity'*, *'extravagancy'* to render *'faste'* when Khrushchev used only one *'roskosh'*.

What are the original meanings of the French words *'faste'* and *'luxe'*? In the dictionary by Antoine Furetière, from the late seventeenth century, the word *'faste'* has three meanings, but only two of them are relevant to us. The first implication is vanity, pride, boasting; it reflects corrupted feelings and peoples' unworthy behavior.⁵⁴ The second meaning is magnificence related to Courts⁵⁵, the luxurious, magnificent way of a king's life, with a touch of respect and admiration rather than condemnation. The word *'luxe'* has two meanings both with negative connotations: weakness based on abundance, which leads to effeminacy⁵⁶ and the wrong way of developing a state when it reached its fullest flourishing, a squandering of resources⁵⁷. Very roughly we can define *'faste'* as the origin of luxury consumption, feelings which lead to excesses in expenditure, but *'luxe'* is the consequence, the dangerous state of ruin both moral and economic. The English translator felt this difference, but the Russian seems to converge the reason (*'faste'*) and the consequence (*'luxe'*). And this mixture was quite justified, as far as the original implication of the word *'roskosh'* was that of excessive feelings.

The combinations of two concepts by Khrushchev can be illustrated by his translation of the passage where both words were used and by the famous monologue "O, Telemachus". In the French original we read : "On leur imputait aussi tous les désordres qui viennent du faste, du luxe, et de tous les autres excès qui jettent les hommes dans un état violent, et dans la tentation de mépriser les lois pour acquérir du bien" (my emphasis - EK). Khrushchev translated *'faste'* as *roskoshi* ('luxuries') and *'luxe'* as *nevozderzhannost'* ('extravagancy').⁵⁸ At the same time, the English translator was more precise: "To kings also imputed all the disorders, that arise from pomp, luxury, and every other excess ..."⁵⁹. For Khrushchev these two words (*'faste'* and *'luxe'*) were interchangeable. In the Russian translation of the monologue the word *'roskosh'* was used eleven times, almost a fifth of the total. The word *'roskosh'* rendered the French words *'luxe'*, *'faste'*, *'volupté'*,⁶⁰ and *'dépense fastueuse'*.⁶¹ But the English translator adhered mostly to the original text, turning *'luxe'* into *'luxury'* and *'faste'* into *'(expensive) ostentation'*.

Thus, Khrushchev made *roskosh* a collective concept, including excessive sentiments and vanity, on the one hand, and expenditure on expensive goods and pound-foolishness on the other.

⁵³ compare **Fr**: c'est vous qui m'avez perdu! c'est votre exemple qui m'a accoutumé au faste, à l'orgueil, à la volupté, à la dureté pour les hommes **Rus**: о бедный отец! От тебя я погиб, от тебя научился лакомству, гордости, сластолюбию и жестокосердию к людям **Eng**: it was thy example that made me vain-glorious, proud, voluptuous, and unhuman.

⁵⁴ Orgueil apparent, affectacion de vanité, d'un éclair qui paroist aux yeux des hommes. Les hypocrites donnent l'aumone avec faste comme faisoient les Pharisieus. L'indolence des Stoiciens n'étoit qu'un pur faste and vanité de paroles. Toutes les nations haïssent le faste des Espagnols. Ce mot vient du Latin fastus, qui se tire, selon Martinius, du verbe fari. Le mot de fastus s'est pris d'abord pro jactentia, pour une vaine and ridicule vanterie.

⁵⁵ Faste, quelquefois se prend en bonne part, and signifie simplement, Magnificence. Il faut qu'un Ambassadeur paroisse avec faste, pour faire honneur a son Maistre. Le faste de la Cour de France montre la puissance de son Roy.

⁵⁶ Molesse qui se contracte dans l'abondance, dans la fainéantise, et dans un entier abandonnement aux plaisirs.

⁵⁷ Se dit aussi de la vanité et de la profusion qui arrive dans les Etats, quand ils sont riches and puissants.

⁵⁸ "Все грехи народныя, от лености раждающиеся и нехранением закона, вменяются царем, которыя должны царствовать, дабы закон охранением их царствовал, им же вменяется всякое смятение, бываемое от раскошей, невоздержания и от протчих чрезмерностей, которыя развращают народ и презирают законы" in Fenelon, Pokhozdeniya Telemaka, p. 254.

⁵⁹ Fénelon, The adventures of Telemachus the son of Ulysses, p. 147

⁶⁰ Compare: sans amollir les riches par des **raffinements de volupté** - Не оскудя богатых людей в **раскошах** - no need to corrupt the rich by the **refinements of luxury**.

⁶¹ Compare: faire honte à tous ceux qui aiment une **dépense fastueuse** - посрамил всех, живущих в **великих раскошах** - can shame the fools that are fond of **expensive ostentation** and parade.

And it corresponds very well to other influential texts on political economy of the time: Sergei Volchkov's translation of the famous "Oeconomus Prudens Et Legalis" written by Franz Florinus, a 17th-century German theologian. Volchkov's "Florinova ekonomia" was first translated in 1738 and was often reprinted. There were only eight cases of using the word *roskosh* ('luxury'). Sometimes it is difficult to define the implication of the term, but four cases are quite clear, when the word *roskosh* ('luxury') was included into the synonymic list of corrupted feelings: vanity, debauchery, sloth and so on.⁶² Two tokens have a clear economic meaning, the author warns not to spend money on expensive luxury living.⁶³ Thus, we saw that around the 1720s and 1730s the word *roskosh* ('luxury') implied corrupted feelings and unreasonable economic behavior in translations of European writings vilifying luxury. It raises two questions. 1. How was the same problem described in original Russian texts, and what words were used to condemn the consumption of luxury goods? 2. Were there any Russian translations with a positive image of luxury?

Around the same time Ivan Pososhkov wrote "On poverty and wealth", which is considered as an originally Russian text. And the problems of luxury were a matter for his deep concern.⁶⁴ He mentioned the word *roskosh* only several times in relation to monks and monachism. The semantic row of the words describing the problems of luxury consumption was quite wide: *zateiki* ('fancifulness'), *prikhoti* ('whims'), *kvasti* ('boasting'), *iznezhivanie* ('effeminization'), *izlishestva* ('excesses'), etc. Blaming monks for leading pampered lives, he at the same time admitted that "when there is a tsar feast the law changes".⁶⁵ Pososhkov used the majority of "rival-words" to the concept of luxury, which we mentioned earlier, and almost never *roskosh*. Thus, answering the first question we can state there was a way to discuss the problems of luxury without using the word *roskosh*.

Around the 1730s and 1740s we find only one piece of writing where the problems of luxury were much discussed and partly in a positive way⁶⁶. I am referring to the translation of the "Traité de la paix de l'âme et du contentement de l'esprit"⁶⁷ by Pierre Du Moulin, which was made by Sergei Volchkov in 1734-35⁶⁸. Chapter 7 of book 2 in Du Moulin was devoted to *la volupté corporelle*, or as it was translated in English "of bodily pleasures and ease".⁶⁹ But in the Russian translation Sergei Volchkov rendered it as '*o roskoshi telesnoi*' (corporeal luxury). Neither the author of the text nor the English translator used the word *luxure* or luxury. In the original the author was careful that we should not vilify the carnal pleasures which God gives us. Pleasures can not corrupt us; it is only people who choose to allow their bodies to be masters of their minds. The Russian translator conveyed the meaning very accurately, but had to invent some types of luxury (*roskosh*): corporeal, spiritual, natural. He defines *dobraya roskosh* ('decent luxury') which means such beauty (*ukrashenie*) in the world that God granted us.⁷⁰ *Prostaya*, *natural'naya roskosh* (simple or natural luxury) provides only health.⁷¹ *Dukhovnaya*

⁶² Florinova ekonomia. V devyati knigakh. Perevedena Sergeem Volchkovym. Izdanie vtoroe, Pri Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, Saint-Petersburg, 1760, pp. 11-12, 27, 30.

⁶³ Florinova ekonomia, p. 38.

⁶⁴ Pososhkov, On Poverty and Wealth, pp. 124-137.

⁶⁵ Pososhkov, On Poverty and Wealth, p. 135.

⁶⁶ I thank Andrei Kostin for mentioning this text.

⁶⁷ Du Moulin, P 1661, Traité de la paix de l'âme et du contentement de l'esprit, Paris, pp. 138-145.

⁶⁸ Volchkov, S (tr.) 1734-35, Mir Dushevnyi (1734-35), viewed 18 July 2019, <<http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/medium.php?col=2&manuscript=170&page=1>>.

⁶⁹ A treatise of peace & contentment of mind by Peter Du Moulin, printed by A. Clark for John Sims t Sweetings Alley end, 1671), pp. 110-115.

⁷⁰ Volchkov, S., Mir Dushevnyi, p. 65.

⁷¹ Volchkov, S., Mir Dushevnyi, p. 65ob.

roskosh (spiritual luxury) is the knowledge and love of God. Thus in the first part Volchkov, following the author, tries to exculpate the luxury of moral misconduct, underlining the fact that the body and pleasure are part of the divine plan. We can tentatively state that *roskosh* (luxury) in this part was connected with natural wealth.⁷² But in the second part of the chapter, in a very familiar way *roskosh* (luxury) was vilified primarily by changing the attribute from *dushevnyaya* (corporeal) to *plotskaya* (carnal). *Plotskaya roskosh* (carnal luxury) was dangerous for people's feelings.

Thus, in the first decades of the eighteenth century the new phenomenon of increasing expenditure on luxury, primarily imported, goods needed conceptualization, and there was a necessity to describe the new phenomenon. It turned out that a new term, '*roskosh*' ('luxury'), could, at least partly, help to understand the new process, and in the process of translation it coopted moral, aesthetic, and economic connotations, becoming a core concept. In England, the process of conceptualization went in a different direction, narrowing the term 'luxury' to its economic definition. Of course, these processes were not straightforward. But in the Russian case by the 1760s the notion of 'luxury' had become very vague. That is why it is essential to understand why the legislator started to use this term at the time. As we will show below, because of its vagueness, it matched very well with one feature of Russian legislation – its pedagogical mission.

The history of Russian sumptuary laws till the late 1750s

The Russian rulers started to promulgate sumptuary laws quite late, from the middle of the seventeenth century, when in some European countries such as France and England this practice had actually stopped, but in the others (e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Sweden⁷³ etc.) it still persisted⁷⁴. As we saw sumptuary laws were introduced in almost all countries, and Emanuela Zanda found some basic principles in their application all over the world.⁷⁵ First of all, in each society the government considered it as its proper duty to regulate luxury consumption, otherwise the state would be at risk of weakening and debilitating. Luxury is socially disruptive because it dissolves the boundaries between different strata of society. Secondly, protectionist concerns interconnected with sumptuary reasons. The third constant feature is "the duty of government to defend the heritage of the ruling class by preventing their impoverishment." But what Zanda found the most interesting was that "sumptuary legislation, whenever and wherever enacted, was about limiting and controlling the display of luxury rather the actual luxury itself." As far as there are no special investigations of this problem on the Russian material, we can state right now whether all these features could be applied to Russian sumptuary laws.

⁷² It is interesting that nowadays the only difference in meanings between the Russian and European languages is that in Russian the concept of luxury implies natural wealth.

⁷³ See: Andersson, EI 2014, "The dangers of luxury in Swedish sumptuary law", presented at the conference "The geography of Luxury: Eats, west and Global Directions", University of Warwick, Warwick, viewed 18 July 2019 <https://www.academia.edu/7027410/The_dangers_of_luxury_in_Swedish_sumptuary_law_-_Paper_presented_at_the_conference_The_geography_of_Luxury_Eats_west_and_Global_Directions_held_7-9th_of_May_2014_at_the_University_of_Warwick>.

⁷⁴ For a short history of world sumptuary laws see: Hunt, A., 1996, *Governance of the Consuming Passions. A History of Sumptuary Law*, At. Martin's Press Inc., New York.

⁷⁵ Zanda, E., 2011, *Fighting Hydra-Like Luxury. Sumptuary Regulation in the Roman republic*, Bristol classic press, Bristol, pp. 105-107.

The first sumptuary laws appeared in Russia at the time of the Russian tsar Feodor Alekseevich (1676 – 1682). There were two decrees, which could be defined as normative, as they did not include any sanctions for violation of the law. The first determined which clothes court nobility should wear in the Tsar's presence,⁷⁶ and the second obliged his subjects (boyars) to use carriages according to their status.⁷⁷ In these edicts there were no arguments, which is why these rules, which are difficult to qualify even as restrictions, were introduced.

The reign of Peter I was marked by revolutionary changes in different spheres, and the promulgation of sumptuary edicts was not an exception. His legislation demonstrates very well that sumptuary laws are more than restrictions of luxury consumption; they included edicts imposing a dress style based on the European tradition and at the same time promoted and protected Russian industry. Thus, sumptuary laws went in three sometimes contradictory directions: the forced introduction of the European way of living implicitly led to an increase in consumption standards, including luxury goods; industrial development, including the development of industries, aimed at the production of luxury goods; and lastly, limitations of luxury consumption. The part of sumptuary legislation connected with Western dress has been extensively discussed by specialists who came to the conclusion that “by the end of the reign of Peter, any dislike of the edicts against Russian dress had been overcome”.⁷⁸ We will not discuss it here.

Analyzing sumptuary legislation, we will start with the law which promoted luxury production. The famous “Grant Charter” for Shafirov and Tolstoy was promulgated on 8 June 1717⁷⁹. The preamble denoted the purpose of this decree: “for the common good and good economy of our subjects, for merchants and all craftsmen thanks to whom all other countries prosper”⁸⁰. Shafirov and Tolstoy obtained the right (or the duty) to establish factories and produce gold, silver, silk, and wool brocade, and damask, velvet, satin, taffeta, gold, and silver lace, and ribbons, silk stockings, and so on. A Russian historian, Nikolai Voskresenskii, stressed the importance of this decree signed in Paris; it became the basis for Peter's future industrial policy.⁸¹ Thus, in the middle of 1717, while in Paris, Peter I adopted a law that promoted, first of all, the domestic production of luxury goods and refined taste, but after six months he strictly forbade people to consume these very luxuries by issuing another edict.

The introduction of the first Petrine sumptuary law was caused by economic problems and the Great Northern War, which was explicitly announced in the text of the law. In 1717, it was strictly forbidden to wear clothes embroidered with gold and silver, or to gamble. The penalty for the breach of this law was a fine, but its size remained unknown.⁸² All subsequent laws started with the citation of this decree. In January 1718, there was another edict clarifying the previous one. When manufactures for producing silver and gold braid had been opened, it was permitted to turn out silver and gold lace, but these goods could be sold only in Saint Petersburg.⁸³ The reason for such indulgence was “to avoid unnecessary loss for manufactures”. The edicts of 1718 influenced Russian commerce through the Trade Tariff of 1724⁸⁴. The

⁷⁶ Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii I (hereafter PSZ), no. 850, 19 December 1680.

⁷⁷ PSZ I, no. 902, 28 December 1681.

⁷⁸ Ribeiro, A., 2002, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe 1715-1789*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 102.

⁷⁹ PSZ I, no. 3089, 8 June 1717.

⁸⁰ О распространении в государствах наших и пользе общего блага и пожитку подданных наших.

⁸¹ Voskresenskii, N.A., 2017, *Petr Velikii kak zakonodatel'. Issledovanie zakonodatel'nogo protsesssa v Rossii v epokhu reform pervoi chetverti XVIII veka*, by Serov, D.O., (ed.), NLO, Moscow, pp. 86-87.

⁸² PSZ I, no. 3127, 17 December 1717.

⁸³ PSZ I, no. 3144, 19 January 1718; no. 3167, 16 February 1718.

⁸⁴ PSZ I, no. 4452, 31 January 1724.

imported goods that belonged to luxury, even if there were no domestically produced analogues, were subject to increased duties. It is important to note that the term ‘a luxury good’ was not defined; only through practice can we find out what was considered as a luxury.

The development of sumptuary legislation resulted in The Order of Ranks of 1722, where its core idea was formulated for the rest of the century: “every outfit, carriage and livery should *correspond with the rank and social status*,”⁸⁵ (my emphasis) otherwise gentleship and dignity of rank were diminished, and many subjects became ruined when they wore dresses above their rank and status.

But, despite including sumptuary rules in one of the most influential laws, Peter did not introduce clear sanctions for disregard of the law, and this needs an explanation. First of all, we should take into account Nikolai Voskresenskii’s idea that “Peter in his most important laws ... invariably with his own hand signed the corresponding punishment.”⁸⁶ Punishment seems to be an indicator of Peter’s attitude to a particular law, and it is possible the sumptuary legislation was only partly important for him as far as “... the protection of religious customs, morals stemming from religion, as well as good morals, was a secondary responsibility for him”.⁸⁷ But I have strong doubts that it was the case because the fact of including sumptuary regulations in one of the laws that determined the history of Russia, emphasizes the importance for Peter of fixing the permissible level of luxury consumption. So, the second, and more plausible explanation is that the absence of sanctions can signal that the legislator did not understand to the very end how to control personal luxury consumption.

In general, during the Petrine reign the circle of potentially dangerous items which could ruin unsophisticated consumers, was determined and it did not change much during the eighteenth century; dresses, carriages, and liveries for servants became the symbols of luxury. But the Petrine sumptuary legislation was aimed not so much at banning the consumption of luxury goods as at its regulation, the Order of Ranks fixed the permissible level of luxury; moreover, no clear sanctions were introduced for the violation of the law. To formulate these simple and clear rules it was not necessary to use the concept of luxury (*‘roskosh’*), which was known to Peter the Great. The following emperors and empresses only defined the level of consumption acceptable for them.

After Peter’s death, Russian sumptuary legislation took a break for almost 15 years. Neither Catherine I, nor Peter II, nor Anna Ioannovna paid any attention to the restriction or prohibition of luxury consumption⁸⁸. “In 1732 the English Resident at the Russian court noted that he ‘never saw such heaps of gold and silver lace laid upon cloth, and even gold and silver stuffs, as are seen here’”.⁸⁹ But there were some regulations aimed at the protection and promotion of luxury industries, continuing Peter’s policy with a direct reference to his “grant charter” of 1717⁹⁰. So, till Anna Leopoldovna none of the rulers was concerned with restricting or prohibiting conspicuous consumption.

Unexpectedly, one of the most innovative sumptuary laws appeared in the short regency of Anna Leopoldovna.⁹¹ The most plausible initiator of the edict was Andrei Osterman⁹².

⁸⁵ PSZ I, no. 3890, 24 January 1722.

⁸⁶ Voskresenskii, N.A., 2017, *Petr Velikii kak zakonodatel’*, p. 425.

⁸⁷ Voskresenskii, N.A., 2017, *Petr Velikii kak zakonodatel’*, p. 234.

⁸⁸ There were only some edicts regulating behavior: PSZ I, no. 4983, 29 November 1726.

⁸⁹ Ribeiro, A., 2002, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 101-2.

⁹⁰ PSZ I, no. 6850, 23 December 1735; no. 6997, 28 June 1736; no. 7294, 23 June 1737; no. 6554, 14 March 1734.

⁹¹ Ribeiro seems to attribute this edict to Elisabeth’s reign. Ribeiro, A., 2002, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 103.

⁹² *Zapiska*, 1740

Although this edict contributed several significant updates, it was emphasized that all novelties were not novelties at all, because "...our ancestors had an intention to put it into practice..."⁹³ Who were supposed to be the ancestors (Peter I or Anna Ioannovna) is not clear. In the preamble, it was stated as a commonplace that a prosperous reign depended on nothing else but the protection of subjects from all excesses. Although the term *roskosh* ('luxury') was not used, the word 'excess' could be interpreted as 'luxury' in the modern sense of the term. In the text of the law only one item was mentioned – extravagant dresses with golden and silver decorations which cost more than four rubles. The lack of moderation in dress could lead only to ruin, and the legislator stresses that through expensive dresses a lot of money left the state. The rhetoric of the law reflects the dangers of luxury consumption. For the first time, it was explicitly stated that all these rules did not relate to the noble elite of the first three ranks, the courtiers and foreigners who were not on duty. The struggle against luxury consumption was not to ruin the splendor of the court. The major legislative change concerned sanctions. It was pointed out that the only way to harness luxury was a general prohibition (*general'noe zapreshchenie*).⁹⁴ It is not entirely clear from the text of the edict how this prohibition was supposed to work, but the legislator wanted somehow to control the merchants' activity. During the eighteenth century, the legislator had never been so serious about limiting the consumption of luxury goods to everyone except a narrow stratum of noblemen of the top three ranks. It is hard to believe that Elisabeth did not know about this decree⁹⁵, but in her legislative practice the law was never mentioned.

Elisabeth's reign became a turning point, when sumptuary laws became very detailed, the range of things subjected to regulation widened, and at the end of the reign, the word *roskosh* ('luxury') imperceptibly entered legislation.

The first and the most complete sumptuary law was promulgated in the year after her accession to the throne⁹⁶. It looks like a program to which she never returned, regulating later only some features of luxury consumption. It is important that excesses and superfluity were considered by the legislator as an *obvious* problem for the state and for personal finances: "What a considerable loss to the State and the removal from the State of a considerable amount of money comes from the producing of extravagant dresses and the upkeep of a rich crew". This phrase is likely to reflect the massiveness of the phenomenon⁹⁷. It corresponds with the narratives among nobles who were complaining about debts⁹⁸.

The motives for introducing a sumptuary law remained the same: to avoid the waste of money. But the explanation became more detailed: "but also those who do not have any ranks without realizing their extreme ruin, but only to show how elegant they, their wives and children are ... wear a dress rich with silver and gold materials not according with their status, and ... thus come to such an exhaustion of their estate, that they lose their villages by mortgaging and selling them."⁹⁹ As far as the subjects, primarily noblemen, did not understand that they spent

⁹³ PSZ I, no. 8301, 17 December 1740.

⁹⁴ PSZ I, no. 8301, 17 December 1740.

⁹⁵ As we see later Elisabeth in her main sumptuary law mentioned the same amount of money (four rubles) as the maximum cost of the dress.

⁹⁶ e.g. PSZ I, no. 8680, 11 December 1742.

⁹⁷ Chechulin, N., 1889, Russkoe provintsial'noe obtshestvo vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka. Istoricheskii ocherk, Saint Petersburg, pp. 61, 80, 82–83, 89, 90.

⁹⁸ E.g. Alexei Petrovich Bestuzhev-Rumin 1871, Archiv knyazy Vorontsova, Vol. 2., Universitetskaya tipografiya, Moscow, p. 48.

⁹⁹ PSZ I, no 8680, 11 December 1742: « ... но и те, которые никаких рангов не имеют, не рассуждая о крайнем своем разорении, но только б нарядными себя показать, как сами, так жены их и дети, не до достоинству своему, носят пребогатые с позументом и из серебрянных и золотых материй платье, и делают zelo же богатые на людей ливреи и экипажи, и от того во истощение своего имения так приходят, что и деревень, закладывая и продавая, лишаются».

more money than they could afford, the strict state control was required for their own sake. For the first time not only males, but females and children are mentioned. The new law regulated the costs of dresses for any subject in Russia, including the top nobility unlike the previous edict of 1740, where nobles of the first five ranks were excluded. Thus, the expenditure on dresses for every rank was defined and limited to some extent.

Some changes related to the essence of the notion of luxury; for example the excess in consumption had acquired a shade of temporality, short-lived things were superfluous. Wearing dresses with overseas filament lace was forbidden because their price was too high compared with their fragility, so it was a waste of money.

For the first time in our legislation not only a concrete sum for the fine was introduced, but also a mechanism of control. The fine was equal to the annual salary for those who did not have ranks, and to the costs of their dresses for the rest. The mechanism, how to distinguish a new “prohibited” dress from an old “allowed” one, meant that every luxurious dress must be sealed by a wax seal where it was not visible. It is difficult to imagine how this procedure could be put into practice, especially who should stamp the dresses remaining unclear.

As a whole, this law was a summary and continuation of the Petrine legislation, because one law, on the one hand, limits conspicuous consumption, but on the other hand, promotes domestic industry, including the production of goods of refined taste. This law introduced rules for each group of ranks, singling out especially the court and the noblemen of the first five classes. And regulating the behavior of the first four or five ranks remained the main concern of sumptuary legislation during Elisabeth’s reign.

The attitude to the distinguished nobles through sumptuary laws varied during the reign. The legislator sometimes gave direct instructions to purchase dresses that were expensive and worthy to be seen by the eyes of the Empress. On 2 December 1743, the Empress ordered people verbally to come to masked balls only in good and not miserable (*gnusnyi*) dress.¹⁰⁰ On the occasion of the wedding of the future emperor Peter II and the future empress Catherine The Great (1745), a special decree was introduced, which ordered the nobility who would be in Petersburg during the wedding festivities to prepare in advance the best dresses and coaches they could, and magnates could even get some extra money from the treasury in advance.¹⁰¹ The special attitude to the upper-class nobility was explicitly revealing in the decree banning the import of silk and brocade items to all ports except Petersburg.¹⁰² The capital was suggested to be the main port, where the court of Her Imperial Majesty was situated, where all the noblemen and foreign ambassadors lived, so for all that noble society luxury goods were more necessary than for people in other cities.

A novelty of sumptuary legislation was the prohibition of bathetic funerals by the laws of 1746¹⁰³. These laws regulated the behavior of bureaucrats and nobles, “who made a lot of waste spending at the burial of noble persons” (*izlishnikh i napasnykh raskhodov*). In continuation of Peter I’s policy, decrees promoted the development of domestic industries, including manufacturing luxury goods.¹⁰⁴

Thus, despite a widespread use of the concept of ‘luxury’ in Russian literature, sumptuary laws described the dangers of conspicuous consumption and regulations of luxurious consumption without using the word itself, the notions of ‘excess’ or ‘superfluity’ seeming to be

¹⁰⁰ PSZ I, no. 8827, 2 December 1743.

¹⁰¹ PSZ I, no. 9124, 16 March 1745.

¹⁰² PSZ I, no. 10803, 3 March 1758.

¹⁰³ PSZ I, no. 9286, 15 May 1746; no. 9327, 1 September 1746.

¹⁰⁴ PSZ I, no. 9694, 14 December 1749; no. 10057, 14 December 1752

sufficient. The main idea was to protect the existing social structure. And the social structure had to be visible; every subject should follow the rules of dress according to their rank. But neither were sanctions for violation of these rules introduced, nor were these rules clearly written. But, at the end of 1760 something happened, and in less than five months two edicts appeared mentioning the dangers of luxury.

The inclusion of the concept of luxury into Russian sumptuary laws

The first decree appeared during the work of the Conference (Cabinet) at the Court of Elisabeth (1756 – 1762). On 20 November 1760,¹⁰⁵ discussing the lack of craftsmen which caused shortages in the Army, the Members of the Conference pointed out that a great number of tailors resulted in luxury which was harmful for the state, but it was difficult to find artisans for army supply. “Luxury harmful for the state” means expensive foreign goods in this context. The immediate occasion for the introduction of this decree was, as in Peter I’s time, the lack of munitions during the Seven Years’ War. But it was not a sumptuary law as such; just the word ‘luxury’ appeared. We did not find the protocol of this very meeting, but we know that among members of the conference was one Roman Illarionovich Vorontsov, who was directly involved in the formation of the law of 22 March 1761¹⁰⁶, where the concept of luxury appeared for the first time.

The decree of 1761 was a result of the meeting of the aged Elisabeth with the Senator Roman Vorontsov. “When I (Roman Vorontsov – KE) was at the court we discussed the growth of wasteful luxury among young nobility ..., so the import of foreign lace, fancy goods, paper-box, seals should be strictly forbidden”.¹⁰⁷ It seems that the Empress was grumbling at young nobles and new fashions. Roman Vorontsov agreed with her completely, partly because the ban on importing these types of products could help him to promote his own production of substitutes. But I suggest that he was ready to support the harnessing of luxury among youth for personal reasons. At that time his son, Alexander Romanovich Vorontsov, was travelling abroad, and Roman Vorontsov was deeply concerned about his expenditure.

The letters of Roman Vorontsov to his son are very important for understanding the reasons of Russian sumptuary legislation, in general. They demonstrate the concern of a deeply loving father over his son’s actions over whom he has and, at the same time, has not power. “Now I can only keep an eye on you... You are living in Versailles with young people, in your own will, you have money; you can use it decently or dishonestly, the only difference is that your intemperate living will force me to bring you back soon, and everyone will know why you will have to return.”¹⁰⁸ The Empresses, both Elisabeth and Catherine II, seemed to feel the same towards their subjects. The only way to make the subjects obey was to deprive them of money and to subject them to public censorship.

During the whole year 1758 Roman Vorontsov kept repeating: “Remember, my friend, that you went to study, but not to flaunt, and that you cannot make a good name by

¹⁰⁵ PSZ I, no. 11158, 20 November 1760.

¹⁰⁶ I am grateful to Sergei Polskoi who drew my attention to this document. PSZ I, no. 11218, 18 March 1761.

¹⁰⁷ Archive SPb II RAN, f. 36, op. 1, d. 1067, l, p. 160b.

¹⁰⁸ Archives du Prince Woronzow, Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, Universitetskaya tipographiya, Moscow, 1885, pp. 28-30.

prodigality.”¹⁰⁹ “I also remind you: live abstinely, run away from extra expenses ... I allow you to enjoy fun, decent to your years, but only with temperance...”¹¹⁰ At the beginning of 1760 he wrote a cutting letter to Alexander: “I am startled by the fact that you spent more than 15,000 rubles in two years, I know for sure that you were not motivated by necessity, but by pride and vanity alone.”¹¹¹ This letter upset Alexander, and he probably wrote to his father about his frustration, so in one of the next letters from 23 June 1760 Roman Vorontsov offered insights into the problem of expenditure. “Prodigality is one of those qualities that is harmful to a young man, it scares the father, because it may entail something worse. Although now I do not consider you to be extravagant, however, when I suddenly received a large sum of promissory notes I did not know what such a sum of money was used for. Could I consider those costs as fair? ... At the very time when I was trying to hold you back from supposed wasteful expenses, I could hardly bear to keep from you what was happening in my heart I wrote to you that I would forbid the banker to give you money, but instead I wrote to him asking to give you what your needs and circumstances would require.”¹¹² Thus, the father’s anger is no more than a just anger; he can be furious, but he never deprives his children of parental care and love. And in a letter from August/September 1760 he explicitly wrote about it: “I wrote to you that I would define and assign the exact amount that your annual expenses would not exceed; but after I wrote another letter where observing the wealth of our family, realizing your needs and costs, I allowed you to take as much money as you need to lead a decent life, these are the only consequences of my anger”.¹¹³ It could not be by chance that the first sumptuary law appeared when Roman Vorontsov was very worried about his son, trying to limit his expenses, calling for strict adherence to the rules, but in the end, even though he suggested his son spent more than he should, his father did not limit his expenditure, because of the expectations from others, a quite unlimited circle of people.

It is difficult to say who first used the word *roskosh* (‘luxury’), Roman Vorontsov or Elisabeth, but both of them used this word.¹¹⁴ Studies devoted to Elisabeth’s library show that she was a well-educated woman¹¹⁵. In her library there was the “Dictionnaire oeconomique contenant divers moyens d’augmenter et conserver son bien, et même sa santé” by Noel Hotel, where there was a special article about ‘*luxe*’ in a modern sense, describing luxury as excessive expenditure.¹¹⁶ But, what is more important, they certainly knew the concept of luxury not only because of Fenelon and other works, but based on their own experience.

The decrees of 1760 and 1761 are linked together not only because of the views of Roman Vorontsov and Elisabeth, but the beliefs of other committee members, as for example Ivan Ivanovich Shuvalov, who were supposed to bring to bear upon the matter. He was one of those who wrote a draft mapping out the structure and aims of the future government agent - the Cabinet. Its future goals originally envisaged the establishing of a trustee board which was in charge of monitoring the economies of young nobles to prevent their bankruptcy.¹¹⁷ We see that some of the top bureaucrats, let alone the Empress, had similar ideas about luxury and its danger.

¹⁰⁹ Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, p. 25.

¹¹⁰ Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, pp. 28-30.

¹¹¹ Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, pp. 40-41.

¹¹² Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, pp. 43-44.

¹¹³ Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, p. 48.

¹¹⁴ Archiv knyazya Vorontsova, Vol. 31, p. 46.

¹¹⁵ Kopanev, N.A., 1990, *Knigi imperatritsy Elizavety petrovny, Kniga v Rossii XVI - serediny XIX vv.*, Leningrad.

¹¹⁶ *Dictionnaire oeconomique contenant divers moyens d’augmenter et conserver son bien, et même sa santé* by Noel Hotel, Vol 1, 1732, p. 423.

¹¹⁷ Shuvalov, II 1867, Bumagi, *Russkii Archiv*, No. 1, pp. 79-85.

In the law of 1761, the notions of ‘luxury’, ‘education’, and ‘youth’ merged into a single concept of ‘luxury’. For those who had some doubts what ‘luxury’ was, it should now become obvious: being pound-foolish, buying expensive foreign goods, spending more than you can afford. But the main point was to behave according to your status. The appearance of the concept of ‘luxury’ in the context of young nobles’ behavior is very important; at the time of Catherine II the concept became part of a didactic project of educating subjects on how to live decently without losing money.

Catherine the Great, like many of her contemporaries, was convinced how detrimental ‘luxury’ was for the state and society.¹¹⁸ Starting with the Instructions of 1767 (Nakaz Komissii po sostavleniyu Novogo Ulozhenia), she linked the notion of ‘luxury’ with the moral category of ‘chastity’. “The chastity of morals is the second ground to keep discipline, and it is the main necessity for harnessing luxury...”.¹¹⁹ When you look at the synonymic row that Catherine composed developing the statute of the City Police Department (*Uprava Blagochiniya*), it becomes clear she included the concept of luxury in the category of morals together with games, disgraceful, excessive spending, idleness, debauchery, deceit, clothing excesses.¹²⁰ Luxury as a corrupted moral could be corrected and legislation was one of the main ways to do it.

The sumptuary laws of her reign can be divided into two parts: the first includes decrees regulating the consumption of isolated items, the second consists of two edicts of 1775, expressing her main ideas.

A lot of decrees were issued to prohibit conspicuous consumption or to tax imported “unnecessary” goods, such as: furs, coaches, etc.¹²¹ But unlike Elisabeth, Catherine promulgated laws concerning selected luxury items at the beginning of her reign. On 12 April 1765¹²², it was forbidden to import and wear colored fur, except for black and white, but without any explanation. In the same year new duties were levied on old, renewed and imported carriages to stop circumventing the tax system¹²³. On 21 December 1765, new duties were introduced on imported cards; every Empress prohibited gambling, so all these edicts were not something new. Moreover, some laws almost duplicated previous legislation¹²⁴.

But in the middle of her reign Catherine introduced somehow a final version of sumptuary laws. The year 1775 became crucial, when two main edicts were promulgated. The manifesto of 3 April 1775¹²⁵ introduced the rules of acquiring and using carriages, as well as sewing liveries for servants, two main indicators of conspicuous consumption starting with the reign of Peter I. In the preamble, it was stated that “at the present time, many noble families have financial problems, many others are almost ruined by hefty debts, and day after day luxury (my emphasis - KE) increases along with the high cost of living”; that is why the legislator introduced or in fact repeated the rules on how to live without debts. In the conclusion, she underlined that the status of a nobleman is based on inner qualities, but not on superfluous and useless external luxury, including carriages, rich clothes, excess of servants and rich decoration of houses. Catherine pointed out that there was no need to prescribe new rules; she hoped the right mindset and education of noblemen would have its effect. Thus, Catherine declared the rules, but she was

¹¹⁸ Batenev, F., 1898, K dvoryanskomu voprosu, Russkii Archiv, no. 1 (3), pp. 445-448.

¹¹⁹ Ekaterina II, 1767, Nakaz Komissii o sostavlenii proekta Novogo Ulozheniya.

¹²⁰ RGADA, f. 10, op. 1, d. 703, l, pp. 11-12; 24 2.

¹²¹ PSZ I, no. 12374, 12 April 1765; no. 12462, 31 August 1765; no. 12530, 21 December 1765.

¹²² PSZ I, no. 12374, 12 April 1765.

¹²³ PSZ I, no. 12462, 31 August 1765.

¹²⁴ PSZ I, no. 13411, 8 February 1770.

¹²⁵ PSZ I, no. 14290, 3 April 1775.

not even trying to consider all possible nuances, giving aristocrats freedom in their way of living. In about six months, despite the declared freedom, the supervision of the aristocrats' behavior was implemented in the Statute of provincial administration.¹²⁶ The viceroy together with the urban and rural police had to suppress a variety of abuses, but especially "immense and ruinous luxury", which led to "excesses", "debauchery", "extravagance", "tyranny" and "cruelty".¹²⁷ If employees of the city police department (Uprava Blagochiniaya) saw that servants' clothes were embroidered with gold and silver threads, they could cut off this 'luxury jewelry' and deliver it to an office of public assistance. Thus, Catherine did not introduce any penalties and fines in her sumptuary laws. She was hoping for the good will of her subjects, and somehow tried to find someone in a province who would be in charge of the application of the law, but it was obvious that the Viceroy could not afford to spend any reasonable amount of time on harnessing luxury. This is very visible through the analysis of cases when the estates were put under the management of trustees, because of a risk of bankruptcy.

Of course, legislature was not the only way of educating subjects. One of the tasks of Free economic society related directly to educating Russian nobles on how to live decently in capitals without borrowing money. Two authors, Iosif Dominic Regensburg and Johann Daniel Schröter, who proposed their calculations of two answers, obtained the prizes. Iosif Regensburg did not use the notion of 'luxury'; probably because he was writing about a positive image of wealth. "When writing the plan, I tried to please the exterior than interior; and for these reasons it can be concluded that this work is for those owners who like magnificence and splendor".¹²⁸ Johann Schröter describing the same structure of expenditures had the intention of showing "the right economy, where expenses and other luxuries that are useless for feasts do not have a place."¹²⁹ These views are very well matched with the legislative tradition of using the notion of luxury, when luxury is considered as something negative leading to the ruin of aristocrats.

* * *

The vagueness of the concept of luxury is a result of its complicated development in the Russian language. Too many meanings were included in the concept. Of course it could not be an issue for a discussion on political economy, but the vagueness of the term in legislation entailed its consequences. The monarchs, especially Catherine II, considered the concept as part of the pedagogical process of improving the economic behavior of their subjects through modesty and moderation. But as far as luxury was supposed to describe the contemporary economic problems of indebtedness, such an ambiguity became a trap for both the government and its subjects. The former had a lot of trouble defining the circle of dangerous luxury products, as it depended mostly on the personal preferences of the monarch rather than a deep analysis. And the latter had to adopt unwritten rules and to understand what was acceptable, but even if subjects failed to follow the rule nothing happened; the monarch would forgive, or not - it was unpredictable.

¹²⁶ PSZ I, no. 14392, 7 November 1775.

¹²⁷ PSZ I, no. 15 569, 6 November 1782.

¹²⁸ Regensburger, I., 1772, "O razdelenii izvestnoi summy na godovoi prozhitok.", in *Prodolzhenie trudov Vol'nogo ekonomicheskogo obshchestva, k pooshchreniiu v Rossii zemledelii i domostroi- tel'stva*, Vol. 21, St. Petersburg, p. 122.

¹²⁹ Schröter, J.D., 1772, *Prodolzhenie trudov Vol'nogo ekonomicheskogo obshchestva, k pooshchreniiu v Rossii zemledelii i domostroi- tel'stva*, Vol. 21, St. Petersburg, p. 24.

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