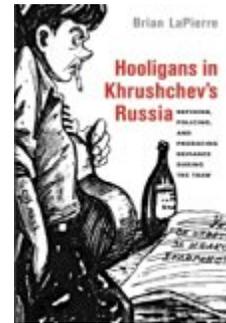


Brian LaPierre. *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. 264 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-299-28744-3.

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Published on H-SAE (August, 2013)

Commissioned by Michael B. Munnik



Hooliganism as a Window into the Contradictions of the Khrushchev Era

In 2012, Western media and their audiences reacted with a combination of bafflement and amusement when they learned that three members of the Russian feminist punk art group Pussy Riot were to be tried under a peculiar-sounding law against “hooliganism.” Perhaps in particular for people in the United States, with little experience of the violent riots of football fandom, the fact that Russia maintained a law against “hooligans” seemed archaic, even absurd. But perhaps “hooliganism,” a broad and ambiguous term for behavior seen as deviant or disrespectful to social norms, was the perfect charge for radical activists. Indeed, a close examination of hooliganism’s history in Russia reveals a category of crime whose flexibility and popular resonance have repeatedly made it a powerful tool.

In *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia*, Brian LaPierre explores the creation and policing of deviance during the Nikita Khrushchev era through a close examination of the crime of hooliganism (in Russian, *khuliganstvo*). Relying on archival sources as well as popular media of the period, LaPierre traces changes in how hooliganism and hooligans were constructed, policed, and reformed over the course of the decade after Joseph Stalin’s death. He pays close attention to how the crime of hooliganism and the figure of the hooligan himself were imagined by a range of actors, from bureaucrats to judges to common Soviet citizens. After describing the evolving forms of policing and punishment that arose in this context, LaPierre concludes with an analysis of how re-

formist policies toward the end of the period led paradoxically to a more severe strategy of state violence to combat a perceived crisis of crime and criminality.

While hooliganism has existed in Russia since the late imperial period, LaPierre limits his study to the Khrushchev period (roughly 1953-64), finding that developments during this time reveal intriguing contradictions and tensions underlying social and policy changes during the post-Stalin period. The book begins with an examination of how the hooligan was imagined at several “sites”: in the law, in popular imagination, and through statistical records of hooliganism convictions. Where Soviet law and mass media imagined hooliganism as a wild, atavistic form of antisocial deviance, LaPierre combs through conviction records to construct an alternative vision of the hooligan: the statistically average hooligan turns out to be a statistically average working-class Soviet man. LaPierre is attentive to the class and gendered aspects of hooliganism, pointing out that the ways in which working-class men performed masculinity—through drinking, maintaining a rough appearance, and exhibiting “uncultured” behavior—were made criminally deviant by bureaucrats and the intelligentsia through the expanding definition of hooliganism. In short, he writes, “the hooligan was a worker, but not the model worker that the Soviet state wanted to produce. In the hooligan, the Soviet state saw the dark side of the working class in whose name it ruled—and declared war on it” (p. 58).

Newly expanded legal definitions and evolving popular conceptions of hooliganism allowed for prosecution of a whole range of behaviors not previously considered criminal, particularly once hooliganism became defined as a crime of disorder and disrespect for society, rather than a crime against a mere individual. In a period of increased social anxiety over urbanization and new openness to foreign influences, the flexibility of hooliganism made it an attractive and productive category for policing all manner of undesirable behavior. An important factor here was that the Supreme Court, awaiting a new draft of the criminal codes, shifted responsibility onto local judges and police for interpreting an increasingly confusing welter of subcategories and definitions of hooliganism.

But it was not only agents of law enforcement who had an interest in expanding hooliganism's scope. Attending closely to Soviet conceptions of space, LaPierre shows how the new category of "domestic hooliganism" drew policing into the intimate spaces of home life, engaging bureaucrats, judges, and citizens in lively discussions of the boundaries between public and private: "Communist morality changed family matters from nobody's business to all of society's business and, in the process, helped make domestic deviance into a valid object of public intervention and criminal prosecution" (p. 89). The hooligan became a figure encountered not only out in the dangerous streets, but also in one's stairwell or apartment. LaPierre's findings here resonate with Susan Gal's 2005 article "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," which describes the public/private divide as a context-dependent distinction rather than an absolute, as well as other recent work in spatially focused social histories of socialism, such as Nick Baron's "New Spatial Histories of Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape" (2007).[1] Indeed, LaPierre carries the theme of the role space plays in daily life through multiple chapters—through the close confines of the communal apartment, making private business into everyone's business; or the impact of Soviet urban planning's focus on industrial development over building for recreation and leisure in factory towns, which left workers with little to do in their free time other than "hooligan" activities like drinking.

LaPierre emphasizes the importance of local actors in expanding the policing of deviance into intimate life: when neighbors complained about parents shouting at their children, or wives called on the police for help with violent husbands, everyday citizens invited the policing power of the state into their intimate lives. The crimi-

nalization of domestic violence may complicate scholarly readings of hooliganism, which have often viewed the behavior as a form of everyday rebellion or resistance. LaPierre's analysis is nuanced in this respect: "hooliganism" was socially constructed according to logic that benefited privileged groups and aided the expansion of the authoritarian state's power, but it was also experienced as a real, sometimes frightening and violent crime by its direct victims. Indeed, in cases of domestic violence, it was often victims who demanded the intervention of state power, while police themselves were reluctant to act.

Where chapter 2 examines changes in the site of hooliganism, chapter 3 details how hooliganism grew in scale as the introduction of the crime of "petty hooliganism" criminalized a host of common behavior, such as spitting in public and swearing. LaPierre notes a certain similarity between this expansion of hooliganism, intended to combat a perceived increase in urban disorder, and the rise of the "broken windows" theory of policing decades later in the United States, which similarly attempted to address a general rise in crime with increased policing of minor deviant behavior. As hooliganism became a mass crime, it became common for working-class men to have regular encounters with the police and justice systems, not unlike the way in which "broken windows" policing resulted in poor and minority men becoming entangled with the criminal justice system in the United States.[2] This comparison could have been pushed further, however; LaPierre interprets "broken windows" relatively uncritically as a simple policing strategy, even while his own research interrogates the very definition of crime. Still, his gestures toward this comparison are intriguing, hinting at larger questions about the reasons for these similarities and perhaps inviting research on the USSR to come into closer contact with other areas of scholarship outside the region.

As the problem of hooliganism grew in scale, the locus of policing shifted; the state drew in certain groups of the public to aid in policing deviance through the use of "comrade's courts" and *druzhina* units (volunteer civilian squads similar to a neighborhood watch program). Through these institutions, citizens put anti-hooliganism laws into practice, seeking deviance and interpreting the law themselves—a practice that unsurprisingly turned to plain vigilantism at times. Local actors were further involved in disciplinary practices with the rise of "soft-line" punishments for hooliganism, as LaPierre describes in the book's final chapter. Those convicted of hooliganism were remanded to their local work collectives with the

expectation that labor, supervised by comrades, would rehabilitate deviants.

This pattern of devolving responsibility for policing crime onto local actors raises questions about the political economy of hooliganism. LaPierre notes that Khrushchev-era soft-line policy developed out of “unsustainable” Stalinist hard-line policies, which “worsened society’s crime problem, clogged its labor camps, and burdened the state’s budget” (p. 168). While this book focuses on legal and social aspects of hooliganism, it might be productive to place future work in dialogue with analyses of criminalization in subaltern studies that deal more explicitly with the relationship between criminalization of laboring classes and states attempting to extract greater labor value (see for example Sally Engle Merry’s *Colonizing Hawai’i: The Cultural Power of Law* [1999], which examines a similar process of criminalizing everyday behavior under the justification of “harm to society”).

In LaPierre’s hands, the story of hooliganism under Khrushchev is not a simple one; he emphasizes the many contradictions and ironies revealed by his research. The Thaw is commonly viewed as a time of liberalization, de-Stalinization, and reform; but this decade also saw a dramatic broadening of the scope of policing, particularly into intimate spheres of life and everyday behavior. The hooligan was legally defined as a social deviant whose primary crime was disrespect for society—yet, as LaPierre shows, the typical person convicted of hooliganism was precisely the working-class adult man whom Soviet ideology placed at the center of socialist society. Anti-hooligan policies were contradictory and inconsistent, which LaPierre argues should be viewed as a hallmark of Khrushchev’s era: “Rather than creating a coherent forerunner of ‘socialism with a human face,’ Khrushchev’s hesitant reforms called into being a confused and unsettled socialism: a socialism of unresolved opposites within whose Janus face Soviet citizens saw both a past and a future filled with penalties and limits as well as promises and possibilities” (p. 196).

On the whole, LaPierre successfully emphasizes the ways in which the social construction of hooliganism produced deviance, describing how the many shifts in the legal and popular definitions of the crime, as well as in policing methods, had dramatic effects not only on the number of convicted hooligans but also on the types of behavior and spheres of life that fell within the bounds of “hooliganism” in a given period. This analysis is strongly shaped by sociological theory—in particu-

lar labeling theory—and placed in dialogue with criminological work on urban environments in the West. Curiously, LaPierre applies Foucauldian concepts, in particular a focus on how deviance is produced by policing and normalizing discourses, without explicit reference to Michel Foucault’s work. A closer engagement with this area of social theory could be especially fruitful, given that LaPierre’s case is structurally unusual: much of the existing literature studies the policing of “deviants” who are members of socially marginal groups, often ethnic or racial minorities. But as LaPierre demonstrates, hooligans were generally members of the most valorized social group in Soviet ideology.

Occasionally LaPierre’s language is imprecise, describing “abuses” or “misuses” of the label; it is not always clear from whose perspective the “hooliganism” label was misapplied. When LaPierre writes that the incredible ambiguity and flexibility of hooliganism as legally defined “made the criminal category of hooliganism both extremely difficult to define and temptingly easy to exploit and abuse,” is he implying that there was an objectively correct way to use the category, or obliquely referring to cases in which some historical actors complained about abuse and exploitation (p. 28)? In any case, that the crime has always been (and continues to be) ill-defined suggests that ambiguity should be understood as an essential feature of hooliganism: “exploitation” of the category is use, rather than misuse.

The book is thoroughly researched and carefully documented. LaPierre synthesizes material drawn from a range of archival sources, including official statements and legal records, newspapers and citizen’s complaints, and even popular magazines such as *Krokodil* and *Ogonek*. His readings of the historical evidence are attentive to the contexts of their production. The book displays an impressive command of diverse source material, from the statistical to the satirical. One very minor complaint is that the book does not include any illustrations of the many cartoons that LaPierre describes in his discussions of popular beliefs and attitudes. Reading his analysis made me eager to look through the archives of *Krokodil*.

Research in Soviet social and cultural history, particularly by Sheila Fitzpatrick and her students, has made great progress in the past several decades toward detotalizing our conception of the Soviet state and its power, pointing out the importance of everyday people’s experiences and agency in creating Soviet society. LaPierre’s deeply researched and close analysis of the

specific case of hooliganism shows just how complex and contradictory the relationship was between state and society in Khrushchev's Russia.

Notes

[1]. Susan Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," *Differences* 13, no. 1 (2005): 77-95; and Nick Baron, "New Spatial Histories of Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union: Surveying the Landscape," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 3 (2007):

374-400.

[2]. See, for example, Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1995, repr.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Bernard E. Harcourt, "Reflecting on the Subject: A Critique of the Social Influence Conception of Deterrence, the Broken Windows Theory, and Order-Maintenance Policing New York Style," *Michigan Law Review* 97, no. 2 (1998): 291-389.

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Citation: Jessica Mason. Review of LaPierre, Brian, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw*. H-SAE, H-Net Reviews. August, 2013.

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