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Abstract- The rise of hooliganism in Soviet Belarus' populous areas between 1953 and 1968 constituted a significant threat to public order. Hooligans disrespected the legal underpinnings of the Soviet state, the rights of individuals, and the capacity of the inhabitants to rest well after a stressful day. Hooligans terrorized lone people during the night, damaging and breaking benches, fences, plants, and lanterns. They also drank alcohol, sang loudly, and spoke, making it difficult for neighbors to sleep. Their false sense of superiority over hooligans' victims boosted their self-esteem. The Belarusian Military District's service members engaged in specific forms of hooliganism against the general populace. After the Gulag was dismantled, a large number of prisoners were released from prison in part due to the rise in hooligan activity. Hooligans were frequently the result of youthful maximalism, legal nihilism, and domestic instability. Due to the aftermath of World War II, a large number of children were raised in single-parent households where the mother worked long hours without giving the next generation the care it needed.

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Citizens Unleashed: The Surge of Hooliganism in Soviet Belarus Amidst Khrushchev's 'Thaw' (1953–1968)

Alexander Huzhalouski

Abstract- The rise of hooliganism in Soviet Belarus' populous areas between 1953 and 1968 constituted a significant threat to public order. Hooligans disrespected the legal underpinnings of the Soviet state, the rights of individuals, and the capacity of the inhabitants to rest well after a stressful day. Hooligans terrorized lone people during the night, damaging and breaking benches, fences, plants, and lanterns. They also drank alcohol, sang loudly, and spoke, making it difficult for neighbors to sleep. Their false sense of superiority over hooligans' victims boosted their self-esteem. The Belarusian Military District's service members engaged in specific forms of hooliganism against the general populace. After the Gulag was dismantled, a large number of prisoners were released from prison in part due to the rise in hooligan activity. Hooligans were frequently the result of youthful maximalism, legal nihilism, and domestic instability. Due to the aftermath of World War II, a large number of children were raised in single-parent households where the mother worked long hours without giving the next generation the care it needed. Oral traditions, musical works with criminal content, and the "cult of thieves' romance" also had a negative impact. To counteract this phenomenon, legislative measures were implemented, and internal affairs authorities made extensive use of preventive measures including the Voluntary People's Guard and tougher prosecution. There were serious problems with the legal system that made it impossible to completely address the hooliganism issues on Soviet Belarusian territory. These issues included poorly thought-out reforms, inadequately trained personnel, a lack of leisure time for young people, the spread of alcoholism, and outdated infrastructure.

Keywords: soviet belarus, hooligans, legislation, police, voluntary people's guard, residents, punishment.

I. Introduction

In the USSR, behaviors that flagrantly disrupted public order and grossly offended the dignity of others were referred to as "hooliganism," a term that was adopted from English. Hooliganism, which started to pose a major concern in interwar Soviet Belarus, had been a "headache" for the authorities for much of the 20th century. In the 1920s, a stranger, a marginalized person compelled to live in both the traditional and modern cultures, began to arise in Belarusian cities due to the country's modernization process. Émile Durkheim described "anomie" as the loss of social control and predetermination experienced by the former peasants as a result of rapid urbanization (Durkheim, 1897, p. 280). Many migrants really ended up in a state of anomie because they were unable to entirely abandon their country roots and assimilate into city life. A state of demoralization and a weakening of relationships with society, as well as feelings of alienation from people and the meaninglessness of life, were its defining characteristics. Hooliganism, the lower-class counterculture of the city, was born out of all of this.

It developed into a severe, chronic social disease in the post-war Belarusian society that was traumatized by the Nazi invasion and ongoing political purges. The demise of conventional social control mechanisms and the lack of contemporary social self-organization mechanisms coexisted in an environment of rapidly increasing urbanization. As a result, a new wave of socially disoriented individuals emerged, lacking the stable basis of traditional life and failing to develop a new sense of self or social identity.

Thousands of Soviet Belarus residents were imprisoned for three days to five years under the hooliganism crime category during the Khrushchev era for offenses ranging from cursing at a stranger to stabbing him. Hooligans formed one of the largest inmate populations in the penal colonies and labor camps. However, hooligans did not only live in camps and colonies. They slept in the neighbor's flat, prowled every street, and concealed themselves in the courtyard. They worked in collectives. "Rather than being the outcome of extraordinary social change, the Soviet hooligan was a depressingly ordinary and commonplace social character" – argued B. LaPierre, an author of thorough account of state campaigne against hooliganism in Khrushchev's Russia (LaPierre, 2012, p. 8). Katharina Uhl examined hooliganism in Chapter 3 of her PhD thesis through the prism of rhetorics and practicies of fighting against religion and deviant behaviour of the thaw youth (Uhl, 2013, p. 169–191). Elena Zubkova's work, whose arguments find many parallels in the Uhl's thesis placed hooliganism to the "backyard" of Soviet everyday life (Zubkova, 2010, 149–151). In the Republic of Belarus seldom is historical research conducted where the attention is centred on the deviant factors that are influencing social development of the nation in the 20th century. The goal of this study is to fill the vacuum.

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Reconstructing events and describing the characteristics of the campaign against hooligans that were implemented in Soviet Belarus can significantly enhance our knowledge of the scope and varieties of this phenomenon in the USSR throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The study used the "new cultural history" methodology, which incorporates leisure history. The author employs the methods of historical anthropology, which focuses on common discourses and practices, by drawing on a significant body of archival data and a wide range of published resources (newspapers, magazines, special journals).

II. Blood on the Asphalt

The hooliganism problem was compounded by the initial liberalization efforts undertaken following Stalin's death. After March 27, 1953 order of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 29,734 amnesties were registered on the Soviet Belarusian territory (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 389, Sh. 2). A considerable proportion of these individuals were socially disoriented people with a criminal past. Many of them saw the waning of governmental repressive lines as an indication of its frailty, which aided in the increased criminalization of society. On the other hand, Nikita Khrushchev assigned the duty of complete eradication of crime to the police, courts, prosecutor's office, and the entire Soviet society after announcing at the 20th CPSU Congress the path for the development of communism. The government began to focus on hooliganism as the most visible crime that undermined the façade of the "country of the future".

In November 1956 Belarusian Minister of Justice Ivan Vietraŭ informed the Communist Party leadership of the steadily rising number of persons convicted of hooliganism. There were 1,590 of these individuals in 1948, 2,191 in 1950, 2,425 in 1952, 2,959 in 1954, 2,968 in 1955, and 2,483 in the first half of 1956. During the same period, approximately 16,000 people were charged "for violation of public order" by administrative commissions – public entities for crime prevention under local government. The regions of Minsk, Homiel, and Viciebsk had the highest number of hooliganism incidents. Workers were responsible for 58% of all hooligan incidents, followed by collective farmers (29%), white collars (7%), students (5%), and unemployed (1%). 96% of the crimes were perpetrated by drunken individuals (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 450, Sh. 749–751).

In 1956, news reports of hooligan behavior in Belarus looked like reports from the war lines. "Railway workers from the Minsk station in suburban trains drunkenly insulted passengers, conductors and inspectors, started fights, broke stop valves, stopped trains, created a threat to safe traffic", reported the most popular Belarusian newspaper (Losev, 1956). According to the newspaper regional correspondent, "...hooligan Pastušenka was taken into custody following his knife-killing of a female in the heart of Mahileu, close to the regional police headquarters. Before he had been arrested by the municipal police for using brass knuckles to attack a civilian in the vicinity of the "Dnipro" restaurant." (Gur, 1956). "The teacher of technical school, who was on duty in the student dormitory and stood up for a female student, was killed by a hooligan with a knife" in the same Belarusian city (Prokudovich, 1956). Most of the time, people were scared to confront irate hooligans and to report incidents to the police.

There was a demographic reason for the growth of hooliganism as well. The majority of hooligans during the "thaw" were young men who had lost their parents to the Second World War and were left on their own. Even young people from wealthy families, who were not inclined to deviant behavior, were provoked by the hooligan romance – boldness in behavior bolstered by a knife or a club in the pocket, as well as gangster jargon, songs, and tattoos. For instance, the sons of Deputy Minister of Communal Services and director of Minsk secondary technical school, rose to prominence in a critical essay published in the Young Communist League newspaper in 1954. The first heir was engaged in a knife fight, while the other attempted to rob a taxi driver (Krynicki, 1954). In 1956, the newspaper devoted a special article to the son of Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, who was blamed for hooligan behaviour (Piercaŭ, 1956).

Individuals under 25 accounted for over 45% of all those brought to criminal responsibility in Soviet Belarus in 1960. 3,117, or 30.6%, of the 8,598 inmates housed in 13 penal labor colonies operational in the republic on January 1, 1959, were persons under the age of twenty-five. Hooligans comprised the largest group of prisoners (2,125), with 1,228 young individuals. In Soviet Belarus school-age children rose by about 50% between 1956 and 1965. Juvenile delinquency increased along with the number of teenagers. In the republic, 6,340 people between 12 and 18 were found guilty between 1954 and 1958 (including 1,020 in 1954, 1,066 in 1955, 1,482 in 1956, 1,316 in 1957, and 1,456 in 1958). Of them, 1,566 for theft of state property, 1,416 for theft of private property, 1,379 for hooliganism, 234 for rape, 100 for murder, and 1,248 for other offenses resulted in a person's deprivation of liberty. In Minsk, the capital of Belarus, 17.5% of all crimes in 1965 were perpetrated by children (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 517, Sh. 64).

Public order violators typically belonged to gangs of young men and teenagers based on where they lived, worked, or attended school. Usually, an unofficial figurehead served as their leader. For instance, "Peraselsky," "Cosmonauts," "Shanghai

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people," and others were active in the relevant Hrodna districts. Residents of Barysau, Baranavichy, Orsha, and other Belarusian cities were terrified by similar youth organizations.

Gang members were frequently at odds with one another and controlled a specific area. Occasionally, this hatred would show itself in street-by-street and district-by-district brawls. Hooligan fights, particularly during the evening and night, were violent and occasionally resulted in fatalities or significant injuries. Such a collective fight took place on May 3, 1964, in the area of Minsk's Opera and Ballet Theater. The police apprehended eighteen individuals and confiscated metal sticks and knives from them (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 145, Sh. 98).

Hooliganism frequently took the form of random beatings and even killings of bystanders in public spaces. Most teenagers looking for "romance" were doing similar things. Among these "romantics" was a young man named Aliaksiej Hryhorjeŭ, an apprentice turner at the Minsk plant of automatic lines. He and two companions walked out into the street in September 1964, completely inebriated, and started beating everyone they came across. They used their fists after stopping onlookers by asking, "Wait, where are you going?" (Saroka, 1966).

Sexual assault was widespread. For instance, one of the tenants of the Luban hemp plant describes how a day off was spent in the workers' dormitory there: "On Saturday, eight girls went to work in the third shift, and the three of us stayed at home." Thus, following our bedtime, there's a knock on the door. We were neither alive nor dead and it was already late. How terrifying it was! A group of thugs began smashing the door. They inserted a knife into the keyhole, and the knife nearly cut my hand as I held the key from the inside. After that, they began taking the windows' glass out. We were sobbing and trembling with terror. These hooligans broke into our room the following day and made us cry. How ought we to proceed? Here, not even the police can solve the problem. This is not how you should live." (Firshteyn, 1965).

In some situations, the girls, driven to desperation, launched a counteroffensive, ejecting drunken swearers with their cigarette butts in their lips and restoring order to the dance floors (Kobryn, 1958).

Hooligan groups weren't limited to using dance floors. Every day, they removed the visitors' leather gloves and tore off their fur hats on the rink of the Minsk "Charčavik" stadium. Hooligans burst into movie theaters, beer halls, and clubs, staging brawls and beating up people inside. Three young men wearing Voluntary People's Guard armbands broke into the "Pioneer" theater in Minsk in January 1967 and caused severe bodily harm to two local laborers "out of hooliganism." Ivan Harkuša, the rector of the Belarusian Agricultural School, made an application to the city council in 1956 to urge the establishment of a permanent police station in the school due to the rise in violent incidents, which included students beating lecturers (Piskarev, 1956).

Hooliganism led to the commission of more serious crimes, such as the 1966 murder of young writer Ihar Chadanovič, whose Belarusian literary language was a source of offense for the Minsk street thugs (Hienijuš, 2005, p. 52). The following year, Uładzimir Karnacki, a student at the Minsk Cadet School, was murdered on a skating rink in the capital's Central Square. At the same time, Brest's citizens wrote in their collective letter to the CPSU Central Committee: "People are afraid to go out due to frequent cases of hooliganism in our city, one of which ended in murder on November 7." (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 164, Sh. 156).

The criminal acts of the Belarusian Military District service members added to the image of hooligan terror. Officers' ability to regulate troop behavior was undermined by Nikita Khrushchev's armed forces reforms, which began in the middle of the 1950s and resulted in a sharp decline in the number of officers. Specific soldiers and sergeants resorted to hooligan activity as a means of relieving psychological stress due to limitations placed on their freedom and the demands of living under stringent regulations. During their holidays, soldiers stole personal property from civilians, tried to rape women, and consumed enormous amounts of alcohol. Clashes between the locals and the troops revealed the typical pattern of "us versus them" warfare. Many people took part in these battles, some of which resulted in fatalities or significant injuries.

In the statistics of those convicted in 1959 by the Belarusian Military District Prosecutor's office for disciplinary offenses, in addition to 341 military personnel, 83 workers of military construction units were mentioned. This was unproportionally large number. Many of the military builders who served in these paramilitary organizations were uneducated, had criminal histories, and lacked self-control. The most violent conflict behaviors were documented here, including rapes, group fights, and disobedience to commanders. These incidents were frequently followed by pogroms of administrative and residential buildings. One of such military-organized pogroms, which coincided with the beating of Ivan Savienka, the chairman of the collective farm "Dawn of Communism" in the Brest region and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus was discussed by the republic's party leadership in 1960 (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 541, Sh. 18–20).

The image of a society that was leaving behind the final remnants of capitalism and heading toward a promising communist future was tarnished by widespread hooliganism. Getting rid of it was imperative.

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III. Legislators, Law Enforcers, and Educators

Hooligans were subject to penalties under Article 107 of the Soviet Belarus Criminal Code of 1928. Its first clause punished comparable acts in public spaces with up to a year in prison. By the second clause of the same article, repeat offenders risked up to five years in prison for similar offenses that were made worse by specific rudeness, resistance to the authorities, etc. The 1928 Criminal Code defined hooliganism as "arbitrary acts connected with an obvious insult to society or an individual" (Criminal Code of the Belarusian SSR, 1928).

The resolution "On responsibility for petty hooliganism" was adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic on December 30, 1956, in response to the stream of worker complaints to the Communist Party and Soviet bodies. This paper broadened the definition of deviant citizen behavior by introducing the term "petty hooliganism" into domestic legal practice. It was perceived as a breach of public order and peace, obscenity, and other indecent behavior in a public setting, all of which were previously outside the purview of law enforcement. Similar offenses were punishable by administrative responsibility and imprisonment ranging from three to fifteen days.

A day after the police sent the materials on petty hooliganism, the judge considered them together with the summons of the hooligan and, if needed, witnesses. The judge's decision was final and could not be challenged. Petty hooligans were forced to perform physical labor while serving their time in a sentence (Collection of Laws, 1956).

Numerous petty hooligans were indeed taken aback by fifteen days-long incarceration for engaging in the traditional rituals of their muscular world – drinking, cursing, and fighting. What made matters worse was the reality that any action that deviated from the Soviet way of life could have been classified as petty hooliganism due to the broad definition of the new notion. For example, ideology utilized the youth's love of American jazz music and dancing, as well as European fashion clothes and hairstyles, to justify their hooligan behavior.

It should be mentioned that courts' consideration of "hooligan" cases was not always flawless. Judges have occasionally given seasoned offenders incredibly light punishments. As a result, two Homiel residents who had stabbed several people were given a probationary period rather than being imprisoned by the court (Maskievič, 1961). There were cases when first-time criminals were unreasonable punished by the courts. One such first-time offender was a Mścisłaŭ Agricultural School student who was given a four-year term for smashing windows in a public building. (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 450, Sh. 772).

At the beginning of 1957, the courts punished petty hooligans in large numbers and without special formalities. In June 1957, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported to the republic's party leadership that "between January and April 1957, the Belarusian people's judges, according to the materials handed over from the police, arrested 15,567 people for petty hooliganism. Of them, 1,531 persons are under 18, 4,777 persons are under 25, and 9,259 are over 25. There are 251 communists and 1,527 Young Communist League members among those detained". Judges declined to bring charges against police officers for petty hooliganism in 520 cases within the allotted period because there were insufficient justifications (NARB, F. 4p, Inv. 62, File 467, Sh. 217–218).

A housewife who "was always arguing with the neighbors" and a theatrical actor who had been arrested while intoxicated were among those found guilty of petty hooliganism. However, the overwhelming majority of those convicted were male workers whom the judges sent to humiliating jobs, like street and sewer cleaning.

The Belarusian Supreme Court documents show a tendency for the criminal prosecution of hooligans to decline while concurrently pushing them more aggressively into administrative responsibility:

Years	1960	1961	1962
Total number of Soviet Belarus residents prosecuted for hooliganism	35,965	40,823	44,194
Convicted under the criminal article	4,616	3,293	3 018
Convicted under the resolution on petty hooliganism	31,349	37,530	41 76

(NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 638, Sh. 152)

The Soviet legislation was gradually becoming more humane, a trend reflected in the imposition of administrative responsibility for petty hooliganism. Workers' collectives held meetings across the nation intending to restore normalcy to the lives of criminals. The USSR's Supreme Soviet adopted a document titled "The Basics of Criminal Law of the USSR and the Union Republics" in December 1958. The document discussed expanding the use of persuasion and crime prevention techniques and enhancing the public's role in defending socialist law and order. Following this instruction, the Belarusian prosecutor's office observed a 27% drop in

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arrest warrants issued in 1959 over 1958. The CPSU Central Committee's secret letter, "On increasing the role of the public in the fight against crime and violations of public order," played a part in further reducing the severity of hooligans' criminal penalties.

The humanization of Soviet legislation was reflected in the new Belarusian Criminal Code of 1960, which released hooligans from criminal responsibility and transferred their cases to the courts of their comrades if they beat or insulted citizens or caused light bodily harm for the first time. Even more compassionate treatment for hooligans who "did not represent a significant public danger" was allowed by Article 50 of the new Code, which called for their transfer to workers' collectives for reeducation. At the same time, hooligans were classified as "petty" or "malicious" under Article 201, which carried a maximum 5-year prison sentence for the latter category. Petty hooligans might have been fined up to 50 rubles or sentenced to up to a year of correctional labor if they were found guilty of administrative infractions, which happened twice a year. Changes were made to article 100, "Murder under aggravating circumstances," in addition to the "hooligan" article. The new clause addressing the "hooligan intentions" arose in the new Code. (Criminal Code of the Belarusian SSR, 1961, p. 23, 42).

On October 13, 1961 the Supreme Soviet of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic approved the "Regulations on Comrades' Courts" (Regulations on Comrades' Courts, 1961). During its implementation in 1962, the collective of workers turned over 4,857 individuals for reeducation, and comrades' courts took up 2,542 cases. The media made every effort to publicize the courts' efforts to bring misbehaving comrades back to active communist construction. In less than three months, the comrades' court of the collective farm in Vetka district heard over thirty cases, according to the publication "Sovetskaya Belorussia": "Those who had gone through the court are now actively working, behaving well in everyday life." (Kormachev, 1962). The "Regulations on Comrades' Courts" were amended by the Supreme Soviet in December 1963 with the intention to enhance their authority. One of these amendments permitted comrades' courts to sentence petty hooligans to 15 days of menial work.

The legislation on commissions for minors was enacted by the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Soviet Belarus on November 30, 1961. Their primary responsibilities were "prevention of juvenile delinquency, implementation of measures to combat minors' neglect, as well as placement of children and adolescents and protection of their rights." (Collection of laws, 1961). They were established under the executive committees of district, municipal, and regional councils. Summer camps for "difficult teenagers" were run by the Young Communist League and were present throughout the republic by the middle of the 1960s. To rehabilitate the most recalcitrant young offenders, two labor and one educational camp were established. The idea of physical labor in the collective as the most crucial element of educating and reeducating children and adolescents was established by the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus in April 1960 (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 529, Sh. 7).

IV. Voluntary People's Guard

A crucial tool in the struggle against hooliganism was the Voluntary People's Guard. This public organization was established in accordance with the March 2, 1959, joint resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers and the CPSU Central Committee, "On the participation of the workers in the maintanance of public order." The Guard was not subordinated to militsiya and the management staff was recruited from various organizations: Soviets, trade unions, Young Communist, etc. The Guard's duties included working with the police to prevent and stop public order infractions and educating the populace. The Militsiya Support Brigades, which debuted in 1956 concurrently with the Belarusian Supreme Soviet's resolution "On responsibility for petty hooliganism," were the prototypes of the Voluntary People's Guard units.

Immediately after the publication of the resolution "On the participation of the workers in the maintenance of public order", the activities of the newly formed units acquired a more organized character. Their tasks, powers and forms of work were defined. City and district headquarters headed by the Communist Party secretaries of city and district committees were established. As of April 25, 1959, there were 4,260 units were operating in the republic, where 92,724 people joined, including 6,440 women. The first Voluntary People's Guard unit emerged in rural areas (NARB, F. 4p, Inv. 62, File 503, Sh. 110–113).

People's Guard units were established in industrial enterprises, collective farms, educational institutions, and household management. One group tasked with maintaining public order in Homiel comprised retired military personnel and civil pensioners. The way that public food establishments operate in Minsk was examined by Technical College students. Traffic police squads were allocated volunteer helpers. The Belarusian Voluntary People's Guard prevented more than 800 crimes in 1959 alone. They also arrested over 200 offenders and 5,000 people who disobeyed traffic and public order regulations (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 62, File 528, Sh. 184).

The Voluntary People's Guard was identified by the wearing of red breast badges and armbands, which were provided together with a certificate of unit membership. They typically patrolled city streets and public areas in groups of several persons keeping an eye on public order. The Guard members could arrest

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someone and bring them to the police station, among other extensive powers. It was frequently challenging to put these powers into effect in reality. Alcohol-fueled public order violators were unwilling to comply with the remarks and even attacked Guard members.

The resolution "On increasing responsibility for an attempt on the life, health, and dignity of police officers and Voluntary People's Guard members" was adopted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on February 15, 1962, in response to the rise in incidents of criminals acting aggressively toward squad members. One of the first to get this "increasing responsibility" was Vitebsk resident Ivanoŭ who refused to obey the order of Guard local unit member Vasil Rybkin and stabbed him multiple times during a fight in the cafeteria. As per the ruling of the court, the hooligan received a death sentence. The survivor Vasil Rybkin was given the Order of the Red Star (Andryushchenko, 1974, p. 47–53). About 100 Guard members had already received orders and medals by the time of the second meeting of the Belarusian Voluntary People's Guard in March 1967.

By the mid-1960s, when official statistics claimed that there were 150,000 Guard members in Soviet Belarus, structural weaknesses in their operations were evident. To enroll every young person in the local units, the officials made an effort to cover 100% of the population. For instance, many of the 5,397 Guard members of Baranavičy did not have armbands or certificates, and many did not know their responsibilities or privileges. Almost no patrolling of the districts occurred, and the Guard members' only responsibility was to show up once a month for work at the unit headquarters, where they were granted time off. Members of the Mahiloŭ Guard took off their armbands and joined the group in dancing as soon as they arrived in the city park "on duty." In addition, the Guard members had an "unhealthy tendency" to consume alcohol while carrying out their responsibilities to maintain public order. There were moments when it had scandalous results. For instance, the commander of the Baranavičy meat processing plant unit was taken to the drunk tank while carrying out his duties (Zyan'kovich, 1966).

On the other hand, it was seen that the Guard members occasionally went above and beyond their abilities. A comparable circumstance arose in Kosava (Brest region) when hooliganism was eradicated "as a phenomenon" by the city's unit. The local Guard men called as "bouncers with red armbands" because of the severe force used in this process. A personal grudge would occasionally arise from the conflict with hooligans. For instance, the unit of the Belarusian Institute of Physical Culture conducted a "Komsomol raid" in Minsk city park with about 200 participants following the severe beating of a student there on the dance floor (Bakievich, R. 1965).

V. New Effort to Tame Hooligans

Insofar as law enforcement, the Voluntary People's Guard, Comrades Courts, and workers' collectives were involved, hooliganism persisted as one of the most severe societal issues during the early part of the 1960s. People experienced dread, despair, and dissatisfaction due to the rise of hooliganism. They demanded that punitive measures be tightened to the greatest extent possible because they were unhappy with how the government handled hooliganism. This is demonstrated by the letters that the Belarusians regularly wrote to the Communist Party leadership.

"Last year, our settlement was simply overwhelmed by a wave of banditry," a Minsk ball-bearing industrial settlement resident wrote to Kiryła Mazuraŭ, the first secretary of the Belarusian Communist Party, in April 1963. "There is no sign of the police. You should not trust them if they tell you that there are police posts here. During the day, you could occasionally see police officers on the Mahiloŭ Highway whistling at someone who accidentally crosses the path. There is no protection when it becomes dark, so you are free to kill, rob, or do anything you please. One fine evening on December 5, 1962, an eighteen-year-old student in the 23rd evening school's 10th grade was fatally stabbed on Narodnaja Street. At the same time, the second guy sustained critical injuries. My daughter, 17, has already been the victim of two knife-wielding attacks by criminals. She was almost killed and sexually assaulted in our entry by a rascal who followed her from the bus stop. Saved at that moment by a neighbor who just so happened to be outside. It is impossible to live, work, or study normally in such a circumstance." (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 140, Sh. 132).

A citizen of Babrujsk submitted an anonymous letter concerning the situation in her town to Leonid Brezhnev, the first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, in January 1965: "We are restless, hooliganism is raging fiercely... The injured are in hospitals, a great deal of innocent people are suffering, etc. Some are killed, depriving children and single wives of their parents. One cannot oppose hooligans. They move in large numbers and are equipped with cold weaponry. Our city's elite don't worry about other people since they have taken care of themselves and their kids, who are employed in lucrative positions and education." (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 148, Sh. 116).

The CPSU Central Committee Secretariat in Moscow received an appeal from the Baranavičy Machine Building Plant workers in September 1965, describing the state of affairs in their city as "alarming": "Innocent people have been killed by hooligans more frequently in recent times. The law enforcement authorities fail to take appropriate action against them, neutralize them, and stop the killings. Citizens may no longer travel through some areas at night or in the

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evening without running the risk of being physically attacked, robbed, and stripped of their belongings. These hazardous locations are known to police authorities. These include the textile mill, the pedestrian bridge at the Baranavichy railway station, the city market etc." (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 151, Sh. 185).

A new campaign against hooligans was announced with the July 26, 1966, decree "On increasing responsibility for hooliganism" by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Its writers suggested reclassifying this kind of offense. It was now separated into three categories: hooliganism (severe breaches of public order), malevolent hooliganism (the same acts conducted with unusual cynicism and particular daring), and petty hooliganism (obscene swearing in public places, insulting attitude towards people, etc.). The decree stipulated a wide range of penalties, ranging from a fine to seven years in jail. In particular, using a knife, brass knuckles, or other cold weapon or simply attempting to use one was punishable by severe criminal responsibility, which might last anywhere between three and seven years. For petty hooliganism, administrative responsibility was now brought from 16 years, and if a minor committed a hooligan act twice a year, he was criminally liable. The responsibility of parents of juvenile hooligans, who were subject to fines, was increased. If the hooligan received a prison term of more than five years, he had to serve 2/3 of that term in a colony of enhanced regime. Citizens who stopped hooliganism were equated in the decree with police officers and the Voluntary People's Guard (Decree, 1966).

The police officers' outward look slightly changed after the decree "On increasing responsibility for hooliganism" was adopted; rubber batons started to appear on their weapons. They were permitted to be employed to "restrain the crimes of hooligans and other criminals, as well as against violators of public order who refuse to comply with the lawful demands of police officers, to protect against attacks on police officers or Voluntary People's Guard members, officials, state, public organizations and citizens." Simultaneously, it was utterly prohibited for police officers to use batons against women, children, older and the disabled people. They were also banned from using batons within police stations.

The 1966 decree's sweeping understanding of the hooliganism phenomena led to issues with implementing of laws about accountability for it. Such a broad reading has occasionally led to unfair verdicts. In the annals of Soviet Belarus's legal system, one such ruling led to a great tragedy. The murder of laborer Aliaksandr Nikałajeŭski by communist Hienadź Hapanovič, a member of the local city executive committee, was classified as malicious hooliganism by a Slutsk court in October 1967. Mass riots broke out in response to the judge's attempt to save the government representative from a just penalty, which resulted in the burning of the courthouse, the deaths of a judge and a police officer, and several injuries to troops (NARB, F. 4p., Inv. 65, File 161, Sh. 3–4).

VI. Conclusion

The USSR's internal political climate changed once Nikita Khrushchev took office, and the public declarations of his intention to build communism in the shortest possible term impacted on the decision to punish hooliganism more severely to eradicate it. Preventive work was given much attention among the local populace, particularly the youth. The Ministry of Internal Affairs received substantial assistance from Voluntary People's Guard in maintaining public order. However, police personnel played a crucial role in maintaining security in the Belarusian cities.

The time frame under examination in Belarus marks the pinnacle of hooliganism's growth as a distinct social phenomena and a nascent, semi-criminal subculture. The examination of historical materials and the local press reveals the detrimental impact of hooliganism on inhabitants' daily lives, exacerbating the city's overall decline in crime rates. The majority of hooligan charges were harassing strangers, damaging property, and being done while intoxicated on public streets. These crimes were frequently perpetrated without apparent cause. Hooliganism also frequently served as a breeding ground for other, more serious crimes including rape, robbery, and murder.

Due to unresolved social and economic conflicts in a socialist society, a low legal culture among the populace, and severe deficiencies in the operations of law enforcement authorities, hooliganism was never entirely eradicated in Soviet Belarus. In the years of Brezhnev's "stagnation", hooligans continued to be an essential part of daily life despite all the efforts made by the government to combat them. The attempts with legislation in the late 1950s and early 1960s caused more harm than good. Many of young people in Belarusian Soviet society were still living in a state of anomie, making it impossible for them to participate in the social and political life of the country, which contributed to the persistence of deviant types of conduct.

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Illustrations

1. A police sergeant speaks with a hooligan on one of the streets in Minsk. 1955. Belarusian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents (BSAAVD). 0-148188
2. A youth room officer of the Minsk police department converses with teenagers from disadvantaged families. 1955. BSAAVD. 1-015920
3. Voluntary People's Guard of the Minsk Automatic Line Plant on duty. 1961. BSAAVD. 035209

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