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Rural Crime in Tsarist Russia: The Question of Hooliganism, 1905–1914

The period of Russian history between 1905 and 1914 has been the subject of continuing controversy. Coming as it did before the traumatic shock of world war and revolution, the decade has been a battleground between those who see tsarist society as one that was undergoing a process of gradual but positive evolution in response to the revolutionary crisis of 1905 and those who insist that social tensions within the empire were moving it toward yet another revolutionary outbreak. Although initially concentrated on the urban sector of Russian society, attention in the debate has also been extended to rural areas of the empire. Here, as in the city, the question of the nature and direction of change is complex, and its resolution requires the investigation of a variety of phenomena, not the least of which is rural crime. The appropriateness of a study of deviance as an index of social change in the countryside should be obvious, but it is underscored by the fact that in the years before the outbreak of war in 1914 contemporaries were actively debating this very issue under the name “hooliganism” (*khuliganstvo*). An examination of this question will speak directly to the broader issue of change and stability in tsarist Russia.

The word hooliganism itself appears to have been introduced into the Russian vocabulary at the turn of the century. Although few Russians were aware of its precise origins, they seized upon it, in the words of one observer, “as if it had been long expected, as if necessary for the filling of an empty place, as a broad definition for an entire category of Russian phenomena.”¹ In fact, by 1905 the term was in wide use in Russia and within five years it had become the center of public controversy.

As might be expected with a term that lacked domestic roots and was popularized with such rapidity, there was considerable disagreement over the exact meaning of hooliganism in the Russian context. For some it was synonymous with crime itself, applicable to all illegal acts. For others it connoted a particular attitude with which certain crimes were committed, such as extreme cruelty. And there were those for whom hooliganism represented a state of mind, a psychological condition of “moral insanity” or “moral nihilism.” Yet

1. S. Elpateevskii, “Bezchinstvo,” *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 1912, no. 5, p. 85. The term originated in London, apparently in reference to some Irish inhabitants of the city, not long before its introduction in the tsarist empire (*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* [Oxford, 1966], p. 447). Russians variously described it as referring to an American criminal, an American Indian tribe (apparently a confusion with “apache,” which was being used in France at the time to refer to certain criminals), and what was believed to be the Irish verb to walk or be idle, “guli.” See, for example, the debates of the Russian Group of the International Union of Criminologists, *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia russkoi gruppy mezhdunarodnago soiuza kriminalistov, 13–16 fevralia 1914 g.* (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 132–33, 165.

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despite the diverse ways in which the term was applied in the late tsarist period, hooliganism was a relatively distinct social phenomenon that can be described in a fairly specific way.

Perhaps the most obvious approach to the task of defining the term is to examine the types of deviance classified as hooligan. Though this question was widely discussed at the time, the most detailed analysis was presented in 1913 by a special commission on hooliganism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Lykoshin commission.² On the basis of materials submitted by provincial administrators and zemstvos in forty-seven guberniias, the commissioners concluded that hooliganism comprised "the most diverse activities" of a deviant nature. At its most innocent level it included such "mischievous" acts as public obscenity, singing indecent songs (often to the accompaniment of accordions!), rock throwing, window breaking, brawling, blocking public thoroughfares, defacing buildings, and stealing carriage wheels. Yet simultaneously it referred to more serious crimes, among them assault and battery, rape, arson, and murder. While no attempt was made to assign weights to the various types of crimes involved, the commission did describe a pattern in which hooliganism of the less violent kind spread rapidly and then "not infrequently" escalated into major criminal acts.³ The Lykoshin commission's characterization was shared by others. Sociologist A. N. Trainin, for example, began his report to the tenth congress of Russian criminologists in 1914 in similar terms. He argued that "whatever form reckless violence takes—beating of the first passer-by, theft of property, arson, or even murder—all these acts equally and on the same grounds can be considered hooligan. This actual and juridical diversity of hooliganism is its true essence."⁴

Although hooliganism included a broad variety of crimes it did not include all. Characteristics typical of hooligan activity, which in a rough way distinguished it from deviance in general, did exist. For example, in its rural form hooliganism was universally described as "spontaneous" in nature. Acts of hooliganism were rarely planned in advance and never executed by organized gangs (*shaiki*); instead, they were usually the fortuitous acts of individuals or "groups of youths" gathered coincidentally.⁵ Similarly, hooliganism was commonly understood to lack a direct motive, a characteristic many saw as central to its definition. Officials in Novgorod, for example, described it as crime "committed from maliciousness, or as a result of moral licentiousness, that is, without any visible material or other causes or goals and without any visible or direct provocation on the part of the victim."⁶ Among the crimes most frequently noted as hooligan were acts of violence and disrespect aimed at targets accidentally available, or, as Trainin put it, at the first passer-by. Conversely, among those least mentioned were more goal-oriented crimes like theft. And many traditional peasant crimes, such as pasturing livestock on noble property or

2. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Leningrada (TsGIAL), fond 1276, opis' 78, delo 116 (g. 1913), "Osoboe mezhdovedomstvennoe soveshchanie po voprosu o merakh bor'by s khuliganstvom v sel'skikh mestnostiakh" (hereafter cited as Lykoshin commission report, after its chairman, A. I. Lykoshin).

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

4. *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia*, p. 103.

5. Lykoshin commission report, p. 126.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–26. See also V. I. Gromov, "Bezmotivnoe prestuplenie," *Zhurnal ministerstva iustitsii*, 1913, no. 5, pp. 50–79.

pilfering firewood from private estates, were normally omitted. In other words, hooliganism was not in essence what one scholar has called instrumental, or aimed at goals beyond the immediate act itself. Rather, it was expressive in nature, aimed at immediate gratification.⁷

While there was a strong consensus on the absence of any obvious motive in hooligan behavior, many observers did note one further and somewhat contradictory characteristic of this form of deviance—open hostility to, and rejection of, authority. In part this element of hooliganism was almost universal, directed at all authority figures including parents. But it had more specific targets as well. The clergy, for example, were frequently described as victims of “blasphemous” hooligan acts that ranged from beatings to the disruption of church services. Similarly, members of the educated classes in general and of the landed gentry in particular commonly appear as prime targets. The Lykoshin commission noted that among the most common hooligan acts were insolence toward “cultured and propertied people.”⁸ In the same vein, nobleman V. L. Kushelev, searching for a typical example of hooligan behavior, chose a personal experience in which peasant youths had halted his carriage without cause and threatened him with bodily harm.⁹ Finally, and not surprisingly, local officials—men formally vested with the authority of the state—were frequent victims. Of course, one would expect policemen to be prime targets, given their direct responsibility for curbing hooliganism, but there seems to have been more to the frequency of assaults on *chinovniki* than this. As former bureaucrat V. I. Gurko argued, hooliganism was in part a general “demonstration of disrespect for personality, for the existing order and for established law,”¹⁰ particularly as embodied by the government’s local agents.

Though contemporaries had some difficulty in determining the precise nature of hooliganism, they were much clearer in describing its physical and social setting. Geographically, hooligan activity was concentrated most strongly in the European provinces of the empire, and especially in those areas that were the most thoroughly Russian in their ethnic composition. The Lykoshin commission found little evidence of hooliganism in Siberia and Central Asia and less than average frequency in the Baltic and Polish provinces. In large part religion appears to have been the decisive element: Poles, Tatars, and Germans were all reported to have little involvement in hooliganism as a result of the influence of the Catholic, Islamic, and Lutheran churches respectively.¹¹

Hooliganism was also considered to be a particular problem in the rural areas of the empire. This is not to say that it did not exist in urban centers; on the contrary, it was generally conceded that hooliganism had long been present in Russian cities. It was, however, the spread of hooliganism in the countryside that was the subject of public attention and concern. This was amply demonstrated by the debates of Russian criminologists at their tenth congress, where

7. For use of these terms in connection with peasant rebellion, see H. A. Landsberger, “Peasant Unrest: Themes and Variations,” in H. A. Landsberger, comp., *Rural Protest* (New York, 1973), pp. 21–22.

8. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 123–24.

9. *Trudy VIII s'ezda upolnomochennykh dvorianskikh obshchestv 32 gubernii, 1912 g.* (St. Petersburg, 1913), p. 63.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

11. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 23–24, 129–30.

a number of participants—basing their contentions largely on criminal statistics drawn from the city of Moscow and led by Trainin—argued vigorously that hooliganism was not increasing. But the majority of those present refused to accept either the evidence or the conclusions of the Trainin group. While admitting that hooliganism was relatively stable in the cities, the congress followed P. M. Tolstoi and others in refusing to extend this characterization to the countryside, where, many believed, the problem was a growing and threatening one.¹² The emphasis on hooliganism as a rural evil was shared by the tsarist government as well, a fact clearly indicated by the limitation of the Lykoshin commission's work to rural areas.

Although primary attention in the discussion of hooliganism was devoted to the countryside, all rural areas were not equally affected. According to almost all observers, this form of deviance flourished particularly in those villages with close ties to urban life and, above all, to industry and commerce. The primary vehicle for peasant contact with city and factory was, of course, seasonal labor, and it was among peasant youths who journeyed to urban centers for winter work that hooliganism was most prevalent. According to the Lykoshin commission, the villages around St. Petersburg and Kiev ranked first in the empire in this regard.¹³ It should be noted, however, that factory life was penetrating the countryside to an unprecedented degree at the same time that peasant youths were being drawn to the city. Large numbers of industrial and commercial enterprises were locating outside traditional urban centers in what previously had been villages. In 1907, for example, the minister of internal affairs admitted that in the province of Moscow alone some two hundred villages had become industrialized, and later students of Russian demography have suggested that throughout the empire over six thousand settlements may have begun the transition to urbanism.¹⁴ Hooliganism was especially widespread in and around such formerly rural centers.

Not surprisingly, the social composition of hooliganism mirrored its physical setting. Just as contemporaries viewed hooliganism as a universal phenomenon present to at least some degree in both urban and rural areas, so too did they describe it as characteristic of all social classes. The Ministry of Internal Affairs noted that this form of deviance "now involves the entire expanse of the nation, penetrates all strata of the population. . . ."¹⁵ Yet despite the broad way in which it was portrayed, hooliganism was unquestionably understood to be essentially peasant in nature. The journalist S. Elpateevskii, for example, refused to use the term, arguing that it was too restricted in its social implications and minimized the universality of the problem. Nevertheless, his entire analysis was devoted to the village.¹⁶

12. *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia*, pp. 103 ff.

13. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 123 and 23 ff.

14. TsGIAL, f. 1284, op. 185, d. 5a, "Po proektu uezdnoi reformy," chapter 1, pp. 53-54; and W. W. Eason, "Population Changes," in *The Transformation of Russian Society*, ed. C. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 82-83.

15. See Minister of Internal Affairs N. A. Maklakov's note of November 15, 1913, in Lykoshin commission report, p. 2. The same point on social composition was made by opponents of the government. Fearing that hooliganism might be used as a pretext for repressive action against the lower classes, liberals and socialists took pains to emphasize that this type of deviance also was characteristic of the "privileged" (see, for example, A. Petri-shev in *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 1913, no. 1, pp. 334-40).

16. Elpateevskii, "Bezchinstvo," pp. 85-89.

Emphasis on the peasant, of course, left open the essential question of which strata of the peasantry—who, after all, made up the vast bulk of the empire's populace—were most involved. Evidence on this issue is surprisingly scanty. In response to an inquiry from the Lykoshin commission, few local officials replied in detail. Those who did respond identified hooliganism as much with the wealthy or middle-income villagers as with the poor.¹⁷

There were, however, two groups from among the peasantry that definitely played distinctive roles with regard to hooliganism. The first consisted of those peasants who had taken advantage of the Stolypin agrarian reform to break with the peasant commune and settle on individual farmsteads (*khutory*). These "sober and strong" peasants, as Stolypin characterized them, were among the least likely to engage in criminal activity. Rather, they were frequently mentioned as prime targets of hooligan attacks.¹⁸ The situation was quite the opposite with the other social category singled out for attention—rural laborers. This group, composed of young male peasants, formed the primary pool from which hooligans were drawn.¹⁹ Included under this heading was a diverse collection of occupations ranging from craftsmen to Volga bargemen. Most significant, however, were seasonal industrial workers (*otkhoshie*). Summarizing the opinions of provincial authorities and zemstvos, the Lykoshin commission reported that "the occupational background of hooligans does not admit of generalization, and the only conclusion that can be made on this issue is the harmful influence of seasonal factory labor."²⁰

Though the juxtaposition of the landed *khutorianin* as victim and the peasant laborer as assailant suggests the influence of class conflict on the development of hooliganism, this element should not be exaggerated. In both cases the determining factor seems to have been not wealth but location. The individual farmer provided a suitable target mainly because the typical *khutor* was isolated; it was both physically and socially outside the confines and protection of the communal village. Similarly, laborers were considered susceptible to hooliganism not so much as a result of poverty (low wages were never cited as a cause of hooliganism and, indeed, some industrial laborers were drawn from the more prosperous peasant families), but as a result of their exposure to the new, urban-industrial milieu. The Lykoshin commission's findings indicated that "the growth of hooliganism is dependent upon contact with concepts of a [social] order different from that of the village."²¹

The description of hooliganism, while important, leaves open two fundamental issues necessary for an evaluation of its significance, those of magnitude and cause. As with crime in general, it is extremely difficult to measure accurately the spread of hooliganism. The official criminal statistics of the Ministry of Justice do show an increase of criminal activity between 1908 and 1914 and, particularly significant from the standpoint of this paper, they show an increase

17. Lykoshin commission report, p. 126.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 25 and 128; and *Trudy VIII s'ezda*, p. 86.

19. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 23 ff., and 123–28; Gromov, "Bezmotivnoe prestuplenie," p. 62; and A. V. Likhachev, "Ob usilenii nakazanii dlia khuliganov," *Zhurnal ministerstva iustitsii*, 1913, no. 5, p. 86.

20. Lykoshin commission report, p. 24.

21. *Ibid.*

in the proportion of crimes committed by peasants.²² Unfortunately, however, these statistics suffer from serious deficiencies, most notably the omission of the vast bulk of rural crime. Petty crimes handled by land captains and volost courts, the two judicial institutions into whose jurisdiction hooligan activity was most likely to fall, were simply not included in the official compilation.²³ Somewhat more useful in terms of hooliganism are special statistics gathered by the Land Section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on certain crimes punished by village officials. Even more than in the case of the official Ministry of Justice statistics, these data suggest a steady increase in rural criminal activity,²⁴ as the following chart indicates:

	Arrests and fines by <i>starostas</i> and <i>starshinas</i>	as percent of 1910
1910	89,709	100
1911	99,823	111
1912	117,313	131
1913	132,376	148

Yet here, too, the problem of statistical limitations remains a severe one: only a restricted category of crimes was included in the compilations, and the method of classification was vague.²⁵ Above all, one must contend with the reluctance on the part of villagers and sometimes even other local residents to report acts of hooliganism to the authorities.

Students of the Russian peasantry have frequently noted that village mores operated strongly against informing on criminal activity by fellow villagers, particularly if the crime was directed against outsiders. One local commission on rural affairs at the turn of the century estimated, for example, that of every hundred rural thefts not more than ten were reported, and one might suspect that in the case of crimes where no property was involved the proportion was even lower.²⁶ There is no question that only a small percentage of hooligan crimes was brought to the attention of the authorities. Nonpeasant commentators normally ascribed this to the typical peasant's fear of retaliation from hooligans. There are also grounds to suspect that toleration of, and even sympathy for, the "deviants" on the part of their fellow villagers played a role as well. Kadet leader and lawyer F. I. Rodichev spoke of the need to remove village approval from the hooligans, and local authorities described a "completely passive" attitude among the rural populace, an attitude attributed to familial

22. The basic source of criminal statistics for tsarist Russia is the *Svod statisticheskikh svedenii po delam ugolovnykh* published annually by the Ministry of Justice. For a recent summary and analysis of the data, see S. S. Ostroumov, *Prestupnost' i ee prichiny v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1969). The figures for 1908-14 are found on pp. 168-75.

23. On the shortcomings of the official statistics in this regard, see S. S. Ostroumov, *Prestupnost' i ee prichiny*, pp. 140-42, 161-63. For an insightful and sobering illustration of the difficulties in relying on any criminal statistics, see J. J. Tobias, *Urban Crime in Victorian England* (New York, 1972), pp. 256-66.

24. Data quoted in S. M. Dubrovskii, *Stolypinskaia zemel'naia reforma* (Moscow, 1963), p. 527.

25. *Ibid.*

26. D. S. Fleksor, *Okhrana sel'skokhoziaistvennoi sobstvennosti* (St. Petersburg, 1904), pp. 53-54.

and other ties with lawbreakers.²⁷ Even village officials—*starshinas*, *starostas*, and volost court members—appear to have been extremely lax in repressing hooligan activity and in some cases apparently collaborated with offenders.²⁸ This kind of supportive atmosphere could easily discourage individual peasant victims from turning to the authorities and might even make outsiders consider the reporting of petty hooligan acts to be futile.

Given the absence of meaningful statistics on hooliganism one is forced to rely heavily—but cautiously—on contemporary witnesses. By and large, a strong consensus existed that hooliganism was a serious problem in rural areas and that it was rapidly spreading. The most pessimistic view on this question was held by conservatives, including a great number of landed gentry. The Congress of the United Nobility in 1912 described hooliganism as “paralyzing the proper course of village life” and threatening the very existence of gentry landholding.²⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed by individual rightists, who decried “approaching anarchy in the countryside” or likened hooliganism to a virulent epidemic of cholera.³⁰

This extreme concern over the development of hooliganism was shared by the tsarist government. In a speech to the Duma, for example, the assistant minister of justice argued that hooligan activity was assuming “the magnitude of a social catastrophe threatening the personal security and property of the loyal laboring part of the population,” while the members of the Lykoshin commission referred to it as “shaking the foundations of social order.”³¹ That the empire’s officials were sincere in their apprehension was demonstrated by the actions of the Department of Police. As early as 1910, police officials described hooliganism as a more serious threat to rural order than a renewal of peasant rebellion and initiated major steps to combat it. In particular, the department ordered that the state’s rural police force, which had been concentrated into large squadrons to combat revolution in 1905, be spread more thinly in order to limit hooligan activity.³² Even with the redistribution of police cadres, however, spokesmen for the department admitted that the police “lacked the strength to fight this evil.”³³

The pessimism, and in some cases near hysteria, with which official and landowning circles approached hooliganism did not extend to Russian liberals or socialists. In fact, many progressive observers accused the government of deliberately exaggerating the threat to stability in an attempt to facilitate passage of repressive legislation, including an expansion of the police force and the estab-

27. *Stenograficheskiĭ otchet gosudarstvennoi dumy*, vol. 4, meeting 38 (April 29, 1913), p. 652 (hereafter cited as *SOGD*); and Lykoshin commission report, p. 130.

28. See Lykoshin commission report, pp. 130 ff. and 149 ff.; *Trudy VIII s'ezda*, p. 64; and I. Zhilkin in *Vestnik Evropy*, 1912, no. 12, p. 348. It is worth noting that when Octobrists in the Duma introduced legislation to combat hooliganism it included removing many crimes from the jurisdiction of the volost courts (see *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 38 [April 29, 1913], pp. 620 ff.).

29. *Trudy VIII s'ezda*, p. 88.

30. See report of Ekaterinoslav provincial zemstvo, in Lykoshin commission report, p. 149; and *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 29 (March 15, 1913), pp. 2283–84.

31. *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 38 (April 29, 1913), p. 622; and Lykoshin commission report, p. 2.

32. TsGIAL, f. 1217, op. 171, d. 2 (g. 1910), folder 2, pp. 392–94. On this and other steps taken by the various ministries, see Lykoshin commission report, pp. 5–6, 21 ff., 110–16.

33. *Vestnik politzii*, 1912, no. 43, p. 951.

ishment of a network of punitive workhouses.³⁴ But even though many liberals and radicals approached the claims of the political right with skepticism, they did admit the serious nature of the problem. In the Duma, for example, Kadets attacked a January 1913 resolution in favor of extending the empire's extraordinary laws to deal with hooligans—which had been passed by an official conference of provincial governors—but did not reject the need for some form of legal action. As V. A. Maklakov argued, one could sympathize with the governors' goal of fighting the "undoubted evil" of hooliganism, but not with their methods.³⁵ The same attitude reappeared later in the spring when the Duma debated two measures introduced by the Octobrists, which were designed to heighten punishment for petty crimes and to strengthen the judicial power of land captains. Again Kadets agreed on the need for action against what Rodichev termed the "wave of deviance" sweeping the empire, and this time many also approved of the proposed methods. The Duma vote to commend the projects to the government was 123 to 43, with Maklakov and other liberals joining the majority.³⁶

Of course, the consensus of contemporaries does not prove conclusively a drastic increase in rural crime, nor does the suggestive but limited data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Certainly there are no strong grounds for accepting the characterization of "paralysis" or "anarchy" in the countryside. But there is sufficient reason to argue not only that hooliganism was a serious social problem in the empire but also that it was a growing one, particularly in villages exposed to urban influence.

In the same sense that the evidence does not permit precision in calculating the magnitude of hooliganism, neither does it allow exactitude in regard to its causes. The lack of specific data on the economic and social status of hooligans makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions on the sources of their criminal behavior, but discussion of the issue by contemporaries does at least help indicate the major factors which gave rise to the phenomenon.

In part hooliganism had its roots in aspects of the traditional rural order. One obvious factor, for example, was widespread drunkenness and the existence of a large traffic in the illegal production and sale of intoxicating beverages. Officials in Smolensk described vodka as the "prime mover of hooliganism," and a campaign against drunkenness was foremost on the lists of preventive measures suggested to the Lykoshin commission by 124 zemstvos.³⁷

One broader element of traditional society of great relevance was the relationship of the peasantry to the tsarist legal system. After the emancipation the peasantry, in many respects, was left outside the jurisdiction of the official law code, and there is strong evidence that many villagers were unwilling to accept at least some of the code's basic elements. In the case of hooliganism, contemporaries were quick to point out what they termed peasant "ignorance" of fundamental legal concepts as central in the spread of crime.³⁸ This ignorance might better be described as refusal to accept many assumptions of the "out-

34. See, for example, Zhilkin in *Vestnik Evropy*, pp. 341–43.

35. *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 27 (March 8, 1913), pp. 2112–13.

36. *Ibid.*, meeting 38 (April 29, 1913), pp. 650–69.

37. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 125 and 142.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 141–43.

siders'” legal system as just. Peasant rejection of the principle of private property in land, for example, had long been considered the key factor in encouraging crime against gentry estates, and it was now ascribed a similar role in stimulating hooliganism.³⁹ Similarly, peasant reluctance to accept the legitimacy of officials from outside the village for some time had played a major role in preventing both the reporting of most criminal acts and the apprehension of offenders. As has been noted, this traditional hostility to legally constituted authority was characteristic not only of the peasant mass, but of elected communal officials as well. In short, peasant unwillingness to acknowledge the full validity of tsarist law, while not strictly causing hooliganism, did remove restraints on criminal behavior felt by other classes.

One further shortcoming of the traditional rural order as it emerged after the emancipation was the near absence of a state presence in the village, particularly in the form of an adequate police force. Despite the common conception of tsarist Russia as a police state, central authorities were all but unrepresented in the countryside. Until 1903 the state's rural police force, and indeed its entire administrative apparatus below the district level, consisted only of about 1,500 constables (*pristavy*) and 6,900 sergeants (*uriadniki*). These petty officials were responsible not only for maintaining order but also for a multiplicity of other administrative tasks such as collection of tax arrears, census work, sanitation inspections, registration of passports, and delivery of subpoenas. The creation of a rural guard (*strazha*) in 1903 proved only a marginal improvement in the serious overburdening of the local police. As a result, and as many police officials were ready to admit, the police force was unable to combat hooliganism successfully outside the empire's urban centers.⁴⁰ In fact, the evidence suggests that the state police actually contributed to the development of rural crime. Lacking in training and character and given to handling the populace in a rough and arbitrary fashion, the tsarist policeman appears to have done much to instill in the peasantry a deep disrespect for all laws and authority.⁴¹ This unintended consequence of police behavior was certainly considered to be of import in the emergence of hooliganism, and some orators in the Duma went so far as to suggest that the single most efficacious way to combat hooliganism would be to strengthen “respect for human dignity” in the empire and in its administrative officials in particular.⁴²

39. On this factor in rural crime in the pre-1905 period, see Fleksor, *Okhrana sel'skokhoziaistvennoi sobstvennosti*, pp. 6–7, 12–21; V. V. Tenishev, *Obshchiia nachala ugolovnogo prava v ponimanii russkago krest'ianina* (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 9–10; and S. T. Semenov, *Dvadsat' piat' let v derevne* (Petrograd, 1915), pp. 36–40. In regard to hooliganism, see, for example, the views of the Kazan' provincial zemstvo in Lykoshin commission report, p. 146; or Rodichev's comments in *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 38 (April 29, 1913), pp. 627–31.

40. *Vestnik politsii*, 1912, no. 43, p. 951. In the opinion of the Lykoshin commission, the general weakness of the police and of the judicial system had given the populace the idea that “all is possible” (*usc mozhno*) (see Lykoshin commission report, p. 25). On the tsarist police, see Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, *Istoricheskii ocherk obrazovaniia i razvitiia politseiskikh uchrezhdenii v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1913); and “Istoricheskii ocherk organizatsii i deiatel'nosti departamenta politsii,” in Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii (TsGAOR), fond DP, opis' 302, delo 707, chapter 2.

41. There is a wealth of evidence on this score. See, for example, land captain A. Novikov, *Zapiski zemskago nachal'nika* (St. Petersburg, 1899), pp. 112–18; V. V. Tenishev, *Administrativnoe polozhenie russkago krest'ianina* (St. Petersburg, 1908), pp. 54–58; and even the Department of Police's own *Vestnik politsii*, 1907, no. 3, pp. 8–9.

42. *SOGD*, vol. 4, meeting 38 (April 29, 1913), p. 651.

The weakness of the tsarist police force as a mechanism for control in the countryside was apparently reinforced by shortcomings of another administrative hierarchy, the Russian Orthodox church. As noted earlier, authorities frequently commented on the role of the church and religion in restraining hooliganism among non-Russians. Conversely, they pointed to the inability of the Russian clergy to exert a similarly stabilizing influence. Minister of Internal Affairs Maklakov, for example, was reluctant to abandon the conservative view of the Russian masses as devout and loyal, but he significantly admitted that there had been a weakening of religious feeling in the rural populace and that there did exist a "certain isolation" of priests from their congregations. His concern was evident when he emphasized that reorganization of parish administration was "extremely important" in halting hooliganism.⁴³

In essential ways, then, such as the weakness of administration and peasant hostility toward formal legality, the traditional rural order provided the background against which hooliganism developed. Yet its most immediate causes were of a more recent sort. Chief among them was the advance into the countryside of behavior and attitudes previously associated by contemporaries with urban life. These "urban" values were transmitted to rural areas through a multiplicity of channels; those reported to the Lykoshin commission by provincial officials and zemstvos included the expansion of elementary education, increased circulation of the periodical press, greater availability of "unhealthy" books, the growing presence of urban vagabonds in the village, and even the introduction of moving pictures into the empire.⁴⁴ The primary mechanism in this process, however, was unquestionably seasonal labor in factories. As one writer observed, it was those peasants who engaged in industrial labor without breaking their ties to the village who formed the vital link between the urban middle classes and proletariat on the one hand, and the peasant mass on the other.⁴⁵

There has been considerable debate recently over the effects of the city on deviance, with some scholars challenging the traditional view that rapid urbanization—through disorientation of migrants, dissolution of traditional social controls, and so forth—normally causes an increase in the crime rate.⁴⁶ In the case of hooliganism, however, exposure to city life among peasants who retained ties with the village was undoubtedly a major causal factor. Observers noted, for example, that hooligans were particularly anxious to show themselves as "modern" or "fashionable" as defined by standards set in the city.⁴⁷ More important, contemporaries emphasized the crucial effect of urban contact in weakening traditional rural authority structures. In his report to a government com-

43. Lykoshin commission report, pp. 5–6.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44, 127, 141–43.

45. Elpateevskii, "Bezchinstvo," pp. 108–9.

46. One statement of the traditional view is presented by M. B. Clinard and D. J. Abbott: "The urban way of life is characterized by extreme conflicts of norms and values, rapid social change, increased mobility of the population, emphasis on material goods and individualism, and an increase in the use of formal rather than informal social controls," all of which increase crime (M. B. Clinard and D. J. Abbott, *Crime in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective* [New York, 1973], p. 85). For a critique of the assumption that urbanization magnifies crime, see C. Tilly and A. Lodhi, "Urbanization, Crime and Collective Violence in Nineteenth-Century France," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79, no. 2 (September 1973): 296–318.

47. *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia*, p. 129; and Lykoshin commission report, p. 126.

mission, one judicial official gave the following description of the emergence of peasant disorder in southern Russia in 1904 and 1905:

A significant part of the peasantry, especially youths, leave for wage labor in the south, where revolutionary propaganda is very prominent; returning home to the village these youths have already been tainted by comparatively high wages, corrupted by debauchery and willfulness; . . . rejecting faith, God and morality [they] appear in the village with a certain authority as "experienced," . . . The influence of elders, who remained at home, automatically falls, and the youths acquire ever greater authority.⁴⁸

With the exception of the direct reference to revolutionary propaganda, the statement could aptly be applied to hooliganism as well. Contributors to the official *Vestnik politzii*, for example, bemoaned the weakening of parental authority which, they argued, "to an enormous extent has been a restraining and disciplinary force for young generations."⁴⁹ Others, particularly liberals and socialists, were less likely to mourn the passing of old ways which in their eyes had been an obstacle to individualism and freedom. Yet they too admitted that one aspect of the process of liberation was the growth of hooliganism.⁵⁰

The impact of urbanism on the village would have been profound in any case, but its power was magnified by the Revolution of 1905, particularly in regard to hooliganism. Not surprisingly, conservatives drew the most direct connection between political disorder and an increase in this form of deviance, emphasizing the ways in which rebellion had schooled the populace in violence and rejection of legal and moral authority. Columnists in the *Vestnik politzii* argued that agrarian disorders "had created a contingent of people for whom senseless bloodshed and animal cruelty . . . have become a necessity," and St. Petersburg local officials insisted that the "troubled days" of 1905 had communicated to the village the message "all rights and no obligations."⁵¹ Liberals took a different position, although they also saw revolution as contributing to hooliganism. In their view it was not the revolution itself which was the primary source of difficulty, but its frustration at the hands of an unjust and repressive government. Publicist Elpateevskii, for example, argued that the social "energies" created in 1905 had not been allowed to express themselves fully in a new era of freedom; instead, they were trapped and forced into outlets like hooliganism.⁵²

The role that revolution played in the development of hooliganism does raise the possibility of viewing this form of deviance as a type of social protest, or, as one witness called it, the "rear guard" of peasant rebellion.⁵³ Certainly many contemporaries were willing to take this approach: Lenin described hooliganism as a result of the "terrible anger" of the peasantry, as "their primitive form of protest."⁵⁴ On the opposite end of the political spectrum, the Department

48. *Materialy po peresmotru ustanovlennykh dlia okhrany gosudarstvennogo poriadka iskliuchitel'nykh zakonopolozhenii*, vol. 11 (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp. 29–30.

49. *Vestnik politzii*, 1912, no. 43, p. 950.

50. Elpateevskii, "Bezchinstvo," pp. 98–99, 108.

51. *Vestnik politzii*, 1912, no. 43, pp. 950–51; and Lykoshin commission report, p. 126.

52. Elpateevskii, "Bezchinstvo," pp. 98–99. See also *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia*, pp. 134–35.

53. Gromov, "Bezmotivnoe prestuplenie," p. 68.

54. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Moscow, 1968), pp. 193–94.

of Police adopted a similar position in noting that as the wave of rebellion had receded hooliganism had risen to take its place.⁵⁵

The characterization of hooliganism as a primitive continuation of revolution has much to commend it. In terms of composition, the backgrounds of many hooligans resemble those of peasant rebels: in both cases male youths from middle-level and lower-level peasant families took leading roles, and in both cases connections with urban life through factory labor were salient. Moreover, hooligan activity shared other features with the rural disorders of 1905–7 as well. Insofar as hooligans chose targets, their victims often were the same as those of peasant rebels—gentry landowners, officials, and the like. Further, there is strong evidence to suggest that hooligans often enjoyed the sympathy of the entire village, again mirroring the situation in 1905.

Of course, the parallel between rebellion and hooliganism should not be exaggerated, because fundamental differences between the two did exist. Where village risings at times represented the concerted and premeditated action of local peasants, hooligan acts were normally fortuitous and lacked any organization whatsoever. Similarly, where peasant rebellion was to some degree instrumental, that is, was aimed at redress of longstanding grievances through such acts as seizure of estates, hooliganism was without explicit motive. Although some officials, like those of Nizhnii Novgorod, reported that “hooliganism has acquired a certain ideology and become a form of protest,” there is little evidence that hooligans sought to articulate a program or even slogans. Indeed, if hooliganism had a goal it was self-assertion, which included rejection of the traditional authority of peasant elders and communes as well as that of nobles or officials.

Hooliganism was not, therefore, a direct continuation of revolutionary unrest and in many vital respects differed from it. Nevertheless, it did suggest that many of the mechanisms at work in 1905 and 1906 were still in operation thereafter, and it demonstrated that a significant segment of the peasantry was available for broader and more articulate movements of protest.

One final factor in the development of hooliganism—the Stolypin land reform—requires mention, although its effects were only beginning to be felt before 1914. In the long run, agrarian reform was expected to reduce deviance, particularly by strengthening peasant commitment to private property. In its immediate impact, however, the Stolypin program appears to have stimulated hooliganism rather than limited it. The consolidation of peasant holdings contributed to the creation of a class of landless peasant laborers, who were prime recruits for the ranks of the hooligans. Further, the process of land redistribution itself created friction within the village and simultaneously provided a target for opponents of the reform and for hooligans in the isolated and largely defenseless *khutory*. In fact, there appears to have been a connection between opposition to consolidation and hooligan-type activity. As the Lykoshin commission reported, “hooliganism is assuming even greater sharpness among those who are beginning to act as an obstacle to land reform. . . .”⁵⁶

Given this analysis of its extent and causes, hooliganism in the decade following the 1905 revolution can be characterized as follows: it was partially rooted in the traditional structure of the Russian village, drawing on hostility to nobles, officials, and other outsiders and thriving in an environment in which

55. *Vestnik politicii*, 1912, no. 43, pp. 950–51; and 1912, no. 24, p. 543.

56. Lykoshin commission report, p. 25; and Semenov, *Dvadsat' piat' let v derevne*, pp. 316–18.

there were few formal police mechanisms of social control; and, to go a step further, it was fueled by broader universal themes like generational conflict. It would be incorrect, however, to interpret this form of deviance as essentially traditional or universal in nature. Above all, hooliganism, as the term was generally applied in the late tsarist period, was a transitional phenomenon, a product of the clash between modernization and tradition. The Russian lawyer-criminologist, M. M. Kovalevskii, put the issue clearly when he distinguished between "organic epochs" of stability and "critical epochs" in which old values had been destroyed but no new ones had taken their place. He argued that hooliganism was merely a reflection of the fact that the tsarist empire had entered such a critical epoch.⁵⁷

What, then, can be concluded from an examination of hooliganism in tsarist Russia? As has been noted, there is considerable disagreement over the social impact of industrialization and urbanization, particularly in regard to rates of deviance. Hooliganism does suggest that both processes can have the effect of *increasing criminality, although this point must be carefully qualified. The debate over hooliganism in the late tsarist period has concentrated almost entirely on its rural side, and therefore speaks only to the issue of the potential impact of the factory and the city on villages, not to the question of social development within the city itself. Moreover, even in rural areas hooliganism was not synonymous with crime in general, and the expansion of the former does not necessarily prove a like pattern for the latter. Instead, in drawing conclusions from hooliganism it is better to return to the initial theme of this paper, that of the nature of change in rural Russia. The years between 1907 and 1914 were a period of growth in the Russian countryside as reflected in land reform, agricultural cooperation, and elementary education. The period was also marked by a distinct decrease in peasant uprisings. Yet the process of change was not without its darker side as represented in part by hooliganism, which demonstrated that the violence of the 1905 revolution had left its mark and that many of the forces which had fueled rebellion were still in operation. Simultaneously, it indicated that agrarian reform was not, in the short run at least, without a serious destabilizing effect.*

Beyond this, hooliganism pointed to more fundamental sources of instability in rural Russia by revealing the potentially disruptive influence of urban attitudes and modes of behavior on village society. The primary agent here was the seasonal laborer—a man exposed to the city and the factory and at the same time relatively free of parental and communal control—and the method of expression was hooligan activity (although others, such as the school teacher, could perform a similar function of conveying new attitudes in different ways). At the same time, however, hooliganism reflected another basic cause of rural instability. Although influenced by the new and partially directed against tradition, hooliganism was also reinforced by elements of traditional village society. This distinctive relationship between change and tradition in regard to hooliganism—the way in which the disruptive side of change could be exacerbated by tradition—suggests a broader conclusion on the process of modernization in tsarist society generally: the course of development in the empire was likely to be difficult.

57. *Otchet X obshchago sobraniia*, pp. 192–94.