

## **Policing Postwar Kyiv: Crime, Social Control, and a Demoralized Police**

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In the last years of World War II and the immediate postwar years, Soviet cities were plagued with street crime. Extreme deprivations, massive population movements, and the state's concentration on the war effort undermined regular policing; the comprehensive system of social control was faltering. As a result, central Soviet institutions and newspapers were flooded with letters describing the population's plight and demanding action.<sup>1</sup> Regional bosses also received their share of complaints. In November 1945, the Ukrainian party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, read a particularly frantic appeal for help from Kyiv, where, according to the authors, "bandits humiliate[d] peaceful residents with impunity" and "sidewalks [were] drenched in blood."<sup>2</sup> A directive to improve policing in Kyiv followed, but there were more such letters and resulting directives in the years to come, because the situation did not improve in the first postwar years.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the entire Soviet Union the overall crime rate peaked in 1947 and started declining only the following year after the implementation of the draconian laws of 4 June 1947, which substantially increased the prison terms for the theft of state and private property, as well as for robbery.<sup>4</sup>

It was during this time of uncertainty in late 1947, after the introduction of the new scale of punishments but before any visible reduction in crime rates, that a commission from Moscow arrived in Kyiv to inspect the work of the local regular police, the *militsiia*. As a result of its work, a thick file rich in detail about crime and policing in postwar Kyiv was deposited at the archives of the Soviet Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, a summary of such letters received by *Pravda* in the fall of 1945, in Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI), 17/122/118, ll. 92–93. See also Elena Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo: Politika i povsednevnost, 1945–1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000), 89–94.

<sup>2</sup> Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh ob'iednan Ukrainy (hereafter TsDAHOU), 1/41/5, ark. 113.

<sup>3</sup> See Martin J. Blackwell, "Regime City of the First Category: The Experience of the Return of Soviet Power to Kyiv, Ukraine, 1943–1946" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2005), 375–95.

<sup>4</sup> See Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 405–12; I. V. Govorov, "Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i prestupnyi mir (1920-e–1940-e gg.)," *Voprosy istorii*, 2003, no. 11: 147–49; E. M. Kovaleva, "Organizatsionno-pravovye osnovy deiatel'nosti Sovetskoi militsii po bor'be s prestupnost'iu v poslevoennyi period vosstanovleniia narodnogo khoziaistva i liberalizatsii politicheskogo rezhima, sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh reform (1945–1960 gg.)" (candidate of juridical sciences diss., Moscow Academy of the MVD, 2002), 10–12.

Internal Affairs (MVD), now at the State Archive of the Russian Federation.<sup>5</sup> In this paper, I will use this file, together with some supplementary sources, to reconstruct an important aspect of urban social history: public disorder in postwar Kyiv and the authorities' efforts to curb it.

The provenance history of this source can be reconstructed as follows. On 17 September 1947, the MVD ordered all regional police administrations to submit action plans concerning the "strengthening of the struggle against crime" in the last four months of the year. The Kyiv *Militsiia* Administration obliged by producing a thirty-seven-page document on 25 October. This detailed plan envisaged improvements in all fields of policing, but the measures proposed actually amounted to better efforts and stricter implementation, rather than any radical change of existing practices (1–39). In other words, it was a typical bureaucratic pro forma answer that might satisfy one's superiors in other times. This did not happen, however, because on 9 December the Main *Militsiia* Administration in Moscow replied that the plan was "correct in general," but contained "certain shortcomings," such as insufficient attention to the use of secret agents, lack of focus on eateries and billiard rooms as places frequented by criminals, and the imbalance between "a large number of general patrolling (*obshchenaruzhnykh*) measures and the small number of operative and intelligence actions" (40).

The bosses in Moscow did not approve the Kyiv proposal in part because they knew that the Kyiv police was under investigation. On the personal order of Deputy Interior Minister Ivan Serov, a special brigade of six inspectors from Moscow had just completed a thorough review of the crime situation and policing in Kyiv. A long and fairly critical inspection report was submitted to the chief of the Main *Militsiia* Administration, A. M. Leontev, on 2 December 1947. However, it did not contain any radical recommendations, such as firings or reorganizations (44–202).

This review may have been part of an inner struggle within the central Soviet security apparatus over the control of police force in the Union republics. Serov, in particular, had a long-standing rivalry with the minister of state security, Viktor Abakumov, with both of them trying to compromise each other's appointees.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the review could either prepare the ground for personnel changes in Kyiv or forestall them by recommending improvements rather than dismissals. It is more likely, however, that tensions leading to this inspection originated in the Ukrainian capital itself. For most of 1947 Khrushchev remained demoted to the position of premier, while Lazar Kaganovich took over as the Party's first secretary eagerly searching for all kinds of shortcomings.<sup>7</sup> Serov was a former people's commissar of internal affairs of the Ukrainian republic, in which capacity he had worked closely with Khrushchev;

<sup>5</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), 9415/3/44. Subsequent references to this file are given in brackets in the main body of the text. I would like to thank Leonid Vaynberg for bringing this file to my attention.

<sup>6</sup> See Serov's recent biography, Nikita Petrov, *Pervyi predsedatel KGB Ivan Serov* (Moscow: Materik, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> See Yaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic: The Ukraine after World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 234–35; David R. Marples, "Khrushchev, Kaganovich, and the 1947 Crisis," in his *Stalinism in Ukraine in the 1940s* (London: St. Martin's, 1992); and Yurii I. Shapoval, *Ukraina 20–50-kh rokiv: Storinky nenapysanoi istorii* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1993), 265–67.

later Khrushchev would make him the first chairman of the KGB. If the review was initiated by Kaganovich, Serov could be doing Khrushchev's bidding in mitigating the inspectors' zeal. Such a scenario would explain the attempts at interference by the apparatus of the CP(B)U Central Committee (reporting to Kaganovich) and the reluctance of inspectors (who reported to Khrushchev's friend Serov) to play along. In particular, the Central Committee bureaucrats Stetsenko, Burlikov, and Demin requested a meeting with the brigade's leader, during which they "expressed their dissatisfaction that, along with covering the negative aspects of *militsiia* work, [he] reported also about the positive ones." Overall, the apparatchiks' comments reflected their "one-sided, negative view" of the work of the Kyiv *militsiia*; they also tried in vain to obtain a copy of the brigade's report (203–203 overleaf).

This model would also explain the subsequent developments and outcome of the entire affair. In mid-December 1947, Stalin suddenly summoned Kaganovich back to Moscow, restoring Khrushchev to his full authority as the Party leader in the republic.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, on 16 December the Kyiv *militsiia* bosses prepared a rebuttal to the inspection report—a rather daring act given that the Ukrainian Party bureaucrats considered it too mild. The local police officials argued that the inspectors were biased, often presenting isolated cases and minor shortcomings as major problems (212–24). The brigade, in turn, submitted its refutation of Kyiv's rebuttal on 10 January 1948. On 21 January, the Main *Militsiia* Administration rejected all objections from the Kyiv *militsiia* as unfounded and demanded that all the inspectors' comments in future work be considered (233–34). However, no personnel changes took place, as both the Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs, Tymofii Strokach, and the head of the Kyiv *militsiia*, V. Komarov, remained in their posts. The whole affair ended rather innocently with just a series of three regional conferences held in Ukraine in January 1948 on the improvement of police work and subsequent republic-wide seminars of police chiefs between October 1948 and February 1949 (235–36, 248–50).

Khrushchev and his allies may have won strategically, but this did not mean an immediate benefit to ordinary Kyivites, because no shake-up of the local *militsiia* took place. The crime rate did go down as the result of harsher penalties prescribed by the June 1947 laws, but complaints about widespread theft and hooliganism in Kyiv and demands to do something about bad policing persisted into the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>9</sup> The reasons for the slow improvement in the *militsiia*'s work are, in fact, very clearly laid out in the 1947 inspection report.

### **Recording Crime**

At first glance, the crime statistics gave every reason for optimism. The grand total of crimes recorded in Kyiv during 1946 (2,487) was a significant improvement over 1945 (2,948) – a 15.5 per cent decrease. The largest drops occurred in the incidence of robbery (49 per cent, from 74 cases to 38), aggravated theft (46 per cent, from 1,150 to

<sup>8</sup> The formal decision of the CP(B)U Central Committee is dated 26 December, but apparently Kaganovich left for Moscow even before that, sometime in mid-December. On his recall from Ukraine, see Yu. I. Shapoval, *Lazar Kahanovych* (Kyiv: Znannia, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kyivskoi oblasti (hereafter DAKO), 1/3/414, fols. 2–3; 1/11/323, fols. 48–49; 5/5/1150, fol. 69.

619), theft of cattle (32 per cent, from 28 to 19), and “malicious hooliganism” (15 per cent, from 77 to 55). At the same time, there was an increase in homicides committed during acts of aggravated robbery (43 per cent, from 7 to 10), aggravated robbery (22 per cent, from 64 to 78), purse snatching (18 per cent, from 38 to 45), and non-aggravated theft (33 per cent, from 651 to 867) (48–49). It is easy to notice, however, that the Kyiv *militsiia* reported decreases in less violent crimes and increases in more violent ones, likely because the latter were more difficult to hide. As well, decreases in the incidence of robbery and aggravated theft occurring simultaneously with increases in purse snatching and non-aggravated theft suggest a possible misrepresentation of crimes as less serious offences in order to improve the overall statistical data.

An indirect confirmation of the *militsiia*'s complicity is found in the crime clearance statistics. At the same time as the total number of recorded crimes went down, the percentage of cases cleared also went down considerably between 1945 and 1946, from an incredibly high 95.9 per cent to a slightly more realistic 84.1 per cent. The most violent crimes could not be easily moved to another category or left unreported, and they tended to have a lower clearance rate—for example, 65.7 per cent (23 of 35 incidents) for homicides in 1946 (49).

Other statistical tables prepared by the inspectors confirm this interpretation, although their report contains no statements to this effect. Comparing the first ten months of 1947 to the first ten months of 1946, they found a simultaneous decrease in aggravated theft from 546 incidents to 212 and a rise in simple theft from 676 to 896; an increase in robbery from 29 to 38 cases and a decrease in aggravated robbery from 65 to 28. Increases in specialized categories of theft, such as the theft of cattle (31 incidents in 1947) and “stripping children of their clothing” (4 cases) probably also masked more cases of simple and aggravated robbery. But by far the largest drop was registered in the categories that were easiest to manipulate: in malicious hooliganism, from 55 cases to 15 and in “other crimes”—probably minor offences—from 416 to a mere 70. At the same time, there was no way to hide the 50 per cent increase in homicides during the commission of aggravated robbery, from 8 to 12 incidents (53–54).

Again, the trend towards the general decrease in recorded crimes was coupled with the deteriorating clearance rates. During the first ten months of 1946 the Kyiv *militsiia* registered 2,094 crimes, and during the same period next year, only 1,471. The overall clearance rate, however, also went down from 83.3 to 78 per cent. A quick look at the data reveals the pitfalls of the statistical games played by the *militsiia* bosses. In both years the category of “other crimes” provided the highest percentage of solved cases, 97.4 and 95.7 per cent, but the number of incidents registered in this category went down dramatically from 416 to 70 as police statisticians tried to bring down the grand total of committed crimes (53–54). Thus, in an effort to improve one performance indicator, they worsened the other.

Moscow's inspectors made no comments about the suspiciously large overall decrease in recorded crimes, but they took issue with one of the techniques employed to lower them—the counting of crimes committed as crimes prevented. The emphasis on preventative policing can be traced back to the reforms of the Soviet *militsiia* during the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> Ever since then the *militsiia* bosses had been putting pressure on

<sup>10</sup> See Paul Mark Hagenloh, “Police, Crime, and Public Order in Stalin's Russia, 1930–1941.” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1999), 2–3; and idem, “Chekist in Essence, Chekist in

their subordinates to increase the share of prevented crimes in relation to committed crimes. At the city and precinct level the easiest solution was to count those cases where criminals were caught red-handed together with those where they were apprehended before the commission of the crime. This was precisely the technique the Kyivites used to arrive at the impressive number of 392 crimes that were thwarted during the first ten months of 1947, or 26 per cent in relation to the number of crimes committed during the same period (54). The incidents counted as prevention included some glaringly inappropriate cases. For example, a thief entered the apartment of a certain Khabinska, wounded her repeatedly with a knife, bound her hand and foot, and stole her property. The victim cried out for help as the thief was leaving her apartment, however, and he was apprehended by a policeman who happened to be on the street. Numerous less violent crimes, such as purse snatchings, pickpocketing, and the sale of stolen goods were counted as “prevented” when criminals were caught red-handed. Even a cursory look at the files allowed the inspectors to transfer ninety-seven cases of theft and seven of purse snatching back into the category of crimes committed, which increased the total count there to 1,575 (54–56).

The inspectors also noted the incomplete registration of incidents of pickpocketing. The official statistics counted 118 cases in 1947 with 92 of them solved, resulting in a healthy clearance rate of 78 per cent. At the same time the commission noted that during the first ten months of the year residents of Kyiv submitted to passport departments 441 reports of stolen passports, which had obviously been taken by pickpockets together with the victims’ wallets (56). Actually the correct number, including the data for October 1947, was even higher: 503. One also wonders if the whopping 3,549 reported cases of “lost” passports also covered a number of unreported or unregistered thefts (134).

The Kyiv *militsiia* also routinely refused to register petty theft, in particular the stealing of inexpensive clothing and other personal items from communal apartments and dormitories. Far more serious from the inspectors’ point of view was intentional slowness in the registering and investigating cases involving missing persons. In May 1947 the mother of seven-year-old Mariia Us reported her daughter’s disappearance during a visit to Kyiv. The *militsiia* kept the document in its open files so that it would not spoil the statistics and did absolutely nothing until late July, when they sent a request to the family’s home precinct in Obukhiv raion, Kyiv oblast. The letter asked the local *militsiia* to check with the mother whether she had found her child. There was no reply. After locating this correspondence, the Moscow inspectors demanded immediate action; a detective dispatched to Obukhiv raion learned that after fifteen days of searching everywhere the mother had discovered her daughter at a holding tank for homeless children (58–59). There was no happy end to another unregistered disappearance—that of teenager Valentyna Knyr, whose body was found on the bank of the Dnipro River. Although Valentyna had gone missing under suspicious circumstances—she did not come back from a walk with her boyfriend, who then left Kyiv in a hurry—the documentation was also kept in current files and the post-mortem report somehow went missing. In another case, for eleven months

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Spirit: Regular and Political Police in the 1930s,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42, nos. 2–4 (2001): 447–76, here 456.

nothing was done about the disappearance of Bykovska, a student at the Physical Education College (58–59).

The inspectors also brought to light a glaring inconsistency between the overall criminal statistics and the data submitted by the Patrol Department. The latter claimed that during the first ten months of 1947 *militsiia* patrols in Kyiv prevented 18 robberies, 12 purse snatchings, 271 thefts, and 124 other crimes. They also allegedly solved 31 robberies, 541 thefts, 3 homicides, 108 cases of hooliganism, and 365 other crimes, in the process arresting 118 robbers, 7 murderers, 1,718 thieves, 2,281 hooligans, and 1,625 other offenders. These numbers were highly surprising, since the total number of registered crimes in the city stood at only 1,471, including just 38 robberies and 1,132 thefts. This meant that either the Patrol Department was inflating its achievements or the city *militsiia* was concealing the true scale of crime—or both these things were happening simultaneously. The brigade of inspectors preferred to blame the Patrol Department, probably the least damaging of the three possible explanations (74).

It appears that Moscow had no interest in fully dismissing the Kyiv statistics as fraudulent. The general appraisal of the crime situation in Kyiv in the external review report is mildly critical: “Thus, although manifestations of crime are constantly decreasing, they remain at a high level. Dangerous crimes are numerous and have a low clearance rate. Homicides committed during aggravated robbery are solved at a rate of 58.3 per cent, simple robberies at 76.2 per cent, and homicides at 65.4 per cent” (54 and 176). After some bickering between Moscow and Kyiv about which additional cases uncovered by the inspectors should be included in the statistics, the overall crime clearance rate for the period from January to October 1947 was adjusted from 78 to 73 per cent (206, 227 overleaf, and 234). Even such numbers would make many a police chief in contemporary Western Europe and North America proud, but the Soviet authorities placed before the *militsiia* unachievable targets based on the maximalist principle of guaranteed punishment for all offenders.<sup>11</sup> This made report padding all but inevitable.

### ***Detective Work vs. Security Sweeps***

Some of the problems could be attributed to the recent unsuccessful reorganization of criminal investigation in Kyiv. In April 1947 all detectives working at the city’s 19 *militsiia* precincts were transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Kyiv *militsiia* (*Viddil karnoho rozshuku*). This, however, resulted in the precincts’ refusal to register any crime reports. Victims had to travel to the city centre to lodge their complaints, and detectives arrived at crime scenes with huge delays. By July the city’s *militsiia* bosses had scrapped the reorganization, but the lines of authority and responsibility remained blurred—it was not clear when a case belonged to the central CID or to detectives working out of raion stations (47–48). The investigations of serious crimes in the precincts, particularly homicides, showed

<sup>11</sup> On this Soviet practice, see Louise I. Shelly, *Policing Soviet Society: The Evolution of State Control* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 166. According to Shelly, by the late 1980s the Party leadership expected the *militsiia* to clear some 92 to 95 per cent of all recorded crimes, a rate that was not achievable even in countries with the best-trained, best-equipped police forces and a high degree of community co-operation.

little progress even when good leads were available. The CID did not provide any supervision (76).

Yet the Moscow inspectors emphasized another reason for the shortcomings: the inefficient use of informants and police surveillance of criminal dens. The *militiia* reforms of the 1930s brought these two methods to the fore of good policing practices because they allowed crime prevention; they also reflected the introduction into the regular police force of methods long employed by the Soviet security police.<sup>12</sup> Although the share of crimes that were solved with the aid of police informants increased steadily, at least on paper, from 35.6 per cent in 1945 to 37 in 1946 and 38.5 during the first ten months of 1947, the inspectors saw such numbers as unsatisfactory (49 and 53–54).

In their opinion the main reasons included the low number of informants and their poor selection. The hierarchy of secret police collaborators in the postwar Soviet Union was fairly complex and consisted of several categories. Informers were often criminals, their relatives, or employees of places frequented by criminals; they received irregular rewards in the form of money and food. Agents were almost exclusively active or former criminals; their identities were better protected than those of rank-and-file informers, and they received monthly salary supplements of 200 to 250 rubles. At the same time, agents worked directly with detectives, whereas most informers worked with “residents,” usually retired police officers, who were expected to supervise twenty-five to thirty informers and, after 1945, received substantial salary supplements (upward of 500 rubles) for their work.<sup>13</sup> As of late 1947 the Kyiv CID and precincts had a total of 300 agents and 873 informants. During 1947 the Kyiv *militiia* had to delist thirty-six agents and 118 informers who had left the city or had not been useful; at the same time it managed to enlist only forty-four people. The inspectors suggested that another ninety-five secret collaborators be delisted because of lack of activity (59–60 and 176). On paper there were also thirty-six 36 residents, although a check by the inspectors disclosed that fourteen of them had either left the city or no longer worked in this capacity. Most residents supervised only between five and sixteen informants, and just two residents worked with nineteen apiece. For the purposes of meeting with their informers, the city *militiia* had twenty-one secret apartments (62–63).

Secret agents and informants helped more in the investigation of offenses originating from the local professional criminal network, such as robbery (in 60 per cent of solved cases in 1947), aggravated theft (48 per cent), and theft (40.7 per cent). They were considerably less efficient in the investigation of violent crimes, where perpetrators could be people with no connections to the criminal underworld or itinerant felons from elsewhere: homicides (12 per cent) and homicides committed during aggravated robbery (14.3 per cent) (53 and 62). A very large percentage of reports from secret informers proved false. A spot check of the reports received by the detectives of the ninth *militiia* station, for example, showed that only 49 per cent of the 349 were confirmed. In the same precinct a Captain Havrykov routinely fabricated reports from non-existent informers and freely changed dates on old reports to maintain the appearance of an active informant network (61).

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<sup>12</sup> Hagenloh, “Chekist in Essence,” 454.

<sup>13</sup> See I. V. Govorov, “Neglasnaia agentura sovetskoi militsii v 1940-kh godakh,” *Voprosy istorii*, 2004, no. 4: 109–11.

In some cases where secret informants actually delivered valuable tips, *militsiia* officers were unwilling to pursue them so as not to spoil the crime statistics. One example much discussed in the inspection report and the subsequent correspondence between Kyiv and Moscow was that of the Kurachev gang. Kurachev was a Soviet Army deserter with family roots in Kyiv, who apparently showed up in the city in April 1946 with a group of armed robbers. His gang operated there for a while, with Kurachev's mother selling stolen goods at a bazaar, until a foiled robbery attempt on the street led to Kurachev firing twice at the victim without harming her and then disappearing from the city—probably one of those “prevented crimes” in the police books. Even though the paid agent, “Bela,” reported about Kurachev's activities and a resident named Danilov saw him at the horse races, the city *militsiia* took absolutely no steps to search for him at the suggested addresses. Instead the *militsiia* chiefs dismissed the reports as unreliable (67 and 227). This was likely because the gang's arrest would lead to a large increase in the number of armed robberies registered in the city, many of which, for the time being, remained unreported, unregistered, or registered as simple theft.

Another component of modern preventative policing that Moscow ordered local *militsiias* to implement was the use of police-controlled criminal “entrapment” dens.<sup>14</sup> The inspectors particularly stressed the unsatisfactory work of the Kyiv *militsiia* on this front. The existence of a mere five entrapment dens (four near bazaars and one near the main railway station) was considered insufficient for such a large city, especially since during the first ten months of 1947 the *militsiia* had solved just two robberies and twelve thefts thanks to its surveillance of the five dens. The Moscow brigade suspected that den keepers, who had been recruited as informants because of some compromising information the police had on them, likely engaged in double-dealing (72 and 176). Indeed this was the case with many entrapment dens and secret informants throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> In the meantime Kyiv's *militsiia* bosses promised to create fifteen new entrapment dens (8).

However, as was the case in the mid- to late 1930s, the emphasis on preventative undercover policing did not produce tangible results. Instead the Soviet *militsiia* turned again to purging the cities of “socially harmful elements” and the enforcement of passport rules as primary policing methods.<sup>16</sup> The Soviet authorities re-established the passport system in Kyiv in March 1944, less than five months after the city's liberation from the Nazi occupation. The *militsiia* registered a total of 296,107 people, in the process arresting 552 of them as Nazi collaborators and expelling 172 as former criminals or other undesirables not permitted to reside in the Ukrainian capital.<sup>17</sup> A larger number of people were denied residence permits because they had neither work nor family in Kyiv and were not returning prewar residents; we have the

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, “Neglasnaia agentura,” 114.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>16</sup> On this change during the 1930s, see David R. Shearer, “Crime and Social Disorder in Stalin's Russia: A Reassessment of the Great Retreat and the Origins of Mass Repression,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 39, nos. 1–2 (1998): 119–148; Hagenloch, “Police, Crime, and Public Order,” chaps. 3 and 5; and *idem.*, “Chekist in Essence,” 447–75.

<sup>17</sup> Blackwell, “Regime City of the First Category,” 54. See also DAKO, 1/3/26, fols. 311–12, and 5/2/394, fol. 14.

numbers for Pechersk raion, where midway through the process there were 219 such refusals out of 16,682 applications.<sup>18</sup>

By late 1947, when Kyiv had 662,766 residents, 17,402 residential buildings, and 895 employers (125), massive regular checks of passports and residence permits constituted the bulk of police work in the city. Thus during the first ten months of 1947 the *militiia* checked identification papers in 141,222 residential buildings, meaning that they showed up on average eight times in each of the city's 17,402 buildings. Passport checks at factories and organizations took place 2,179 times, or approximately 2.5 times in the first ten months per place of employment. As a result of such colossal efforts, the *militiia* identified 17,929 violators of the passport legislation: 13,899 people without residence permits, 2,973 with expired passports, and 1,067 without passports (126 and 179). The majority of violators signed written pledges to leave Kyiv or, more precisely, the fifty-kilometer zone around the city in which residence permits were required; many also ended up paying fines. However, 570 of the worst offenders ended up with a criminal record (127).

Yet passport checks were not limited to controlling the observance of the passport and residence permit rules. They also had a more sinister dimension. The Soviet passport system also functioned as a policing tactic aimed at preventing urban crime via social quarantine of "socially harmful elements." This extrajudicial procedure was widely used to cleanse the cities of these undesirables.<sup>19</sup> In the first ten months of 1947 the Kyiv *militiia* expelled 610 individuals, using Article 38, Part "D" of the Passport Statute, which allowed the removal from big cities of able-bodied people who had not worked or been students for three consecutive months. During the same period passport checks yielded 335 former convicts whom the police registered and saw as primary candidates for future expulsions (26, 127, and 131).

Paradoxically, the Moscow inspectors, who seemingly emphasized operative and intelligence work over mass operations, demanded an increase in passport checks, aiming for monthly checks in all residences, places of employment, and educational institutions. On top of that they wanted to infiltrate dormitories and factories—responsible for most infractions—with informants. The *militiia* was also expected to check twice a week if those who had signed written pledges to leave the city actually did so (8, 41–42, and 186).

All information about people included in passport checks ended up in the Central Address Bureau, an institution that provided individuals' addresses on request (in the absence of phone books) but also had distinctive policing functions. During the first ten months of 1947, the Kyiv Address Bureau identified 248 common criminals on warrants from other localities, 108 political criminals, and 492 child-support evaders (137). A separate Department of Visas and Registration (in reality just two people attached to the Address Bureau) dealt with the 153 foreigners residing in Kyiv, the three largest groups being 66 Iranians, 31 Czechoslovaks, and 21 Greeks (171–74).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> DAKO, 791/1/25, fol. 17.

<sup>19</sup> See Hagenloh, "Police, Crime, and Public Order," chap. 5; Shearer, "Crime and Social Disorder," 134–137; and Gijs Kessler, "The Passport System and State Control over Population Flows in the Soviet Union, 1932–1940," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42, nos. 2–3–4 (2001): 477–504.

<sup>20</sup> Many of the Iranian citizens living in Soviet Ukraine were actually ethnic Armenians. Since foreign citizens did not have the right to free education and could not own houses, not to mention

Street patrols and spot ID checks complemented passport checks in homes and work places as a means of cleansing Kyiv from various undesirables. Because the sheer number of homeless children and beggars in Soviet cities after the war created problems of social stability, Soviet authorities tended to criminalize homelessness, especially adult homelessness.<sup>21</sup> The numbers were huge indeed—in the first ten months of 1947, the Kyiv *militsiia* made a sweep of streets, unoccupied basements, and attics, picking up no fewer than 9,364 children, of whom 6,355 were determined to be “homeless” (*besprizornye*) and the remaining 3,009 were “unsupervised” (*beznadzornye*) by their parents. The overwhelming majority ended up being sent to *militsiia*-run children’s assembly points and eventually to the infamous children’s homes, where military discipline coexisted with hunger and abuse. One hundred children were locked up in labour colonies for petty theft. The *militsiia* also fined 945 parents for their failure to supervise their children. Only 139 homeless children, probably those over sixteen ineligible for admission to children’s homes, received real help with employment in the Kyiv region (68).<sup>22</sup>

During the same period the Kyiv *militsiia* also detained a large number of other street people classified as beggars (1,105), vagrants (2,052), and fortune-tellers (118). Of these the police opened criminal proceedings against 18 beggars and 112 vagrants, and expelled 299 beggars and 1,410 vagrants from the city. An unspecified number of people ended up in seniors’ homes and homes for the disabled, where conditions were hardly better than in the children’s homes (167). The one category that is conspicuously missing is prostitutes, who are mentioned once among the unemployed undesirables with criminal links who were to be expelled from the city (10), but never appeared on the list of those detained or convicted. This is probably a testament both to police corruption and to the difficulties in proving this particular crime.

The final component in the system of social quarantine based on ID checks in Kyiv were neighbourhood constables, consisting in 1947 of 145 *militsiia* officers. They were supposed to work closely with the community in preventing crime and were helped by 4,090 volunteer members of the Brigade for Assisting the *Militsiia*, 7,100 designated ancillaries (*doverennye litsa*), and 1,870 custodians (161). In fact this army of assistants existed mostly on paper, and these neighbourhood constables focused on ID checks and prophylactic visits to problem households. Some took bribes from people without residence permits (162 and 229).

The drive to ensure regular and total passport control in Kyiv sometimes clashed with the interests of the city’s enterprises, which often confiscated their employees’ passports in an effort to curb labour turnover. Thus both the Keramika Factory and the workers’ school of the Ministry of Light Industry took away passports, which fact

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the fact that they were closely supervised by the police, those who planned to remain in the USSR usually tried to obtain Soviet citizenship. See the numerous petitions to this effect, including many from Kyiv, in Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlyady i upravlinnia Ukrainy (hereafter TsDAVOVU), 1/21/6, 1/21/7, and 1/21/27.

<sup>21</sup> Shearer, “Crime and Social Disorder,” 128–129.

<sup>22</sup> Present-day Russian historians argue that the increase in the number of homeless children in cities during 1946 and 1947 was connected to the famine that raged in the countryside in those years. See V. F. Zima, “Golod i prestupnost v SSSR, 1946–1947 gg.,” *Revue des études slaves* 66, no. 4 (1994): 757–76. This would be true in spades for Ukraine, which was one of the areas hardest hit by this third Soviet famine.

the Kyiv *militiia* attempted to cover up by claiming that they had been collected for stamping with residence permits. The Moscow inspectors did not buy this explanation, but at least the Keramika Factory managed to overfulfill its production plan for 1947 by 16 per cent.<sup>23</sup>

Document checks and regular security sweeps on the streets also yielded immense numbers of arms left over from the war. In the first ten months of 1947 the Kyiv *militiia* confiscated four machine guns, six 6 hand grenades 106 submachine guns, 448 army rifles, and 901 handguns from city residents. Only 160 items were confiscated from actual criminals; most were hoarded by ordinary people, in many cases probably as a means of self-defense in the crime-ridden city (121). Indeed, the Kyiv *militiia* itself issued submachine guns to its officers patrolling the city's outskirts (32).

Aside from the sweeping document checks and the cleansing of "socially harmful elements," the professional efficiency of the postwar Kyiv *militiia* remained low. Its card catalogue ("operativnyi uchet") of active criminals and criminal groups in the city was hopelessly outdated (65 and 71). Out of a total of 1,248 searches conducted in 1947 in residences of arrested criminals, 706, or 56 per cent, brought no results (119). Police officers routinely arrested people without filling in arrest reports and kept them under guard without a prosecutor's sanction (164). Of the 7,498 people detained in Kyiv in the first ten months of 1947, 1,729—21 per cent—were eventually released. This was an unacceptably high number from the Moscow inspectors' point of view. Apparently many of these detainees were simply caught on the street without any ID papers on them (76 and 177). In other words, blanket measures for population control strengthened public order in general but did not improve investigative work targeting concrete crimes.

### ***A Feeble Police Force***

The Moscow inspectors, of course, did not comment on the theoretical contradiction between the focus on social control and on criminal investigations; they wanted the Kyiv *militiia* to strengthen both of these policing functions at the same time. Instead the brigade catalogued the professional reasons why the *militiia* in Kyiv was not up to its many tasks. First on the list was chronic understaffing, especially in the patrol division, where only 56 per cent of vacancies were filled as of late 1947 (152). As a result police bosses had to violate the rules by accepting candidates shorter than 1.7 meters and with less than a seventh-grade education; many had poor knowledge of Kyiv and only a vague idea of their duties (153–54). Even in the "elite" CID there was not a single person with a college degree: twenty-two had graduated from a secondary school, twenty-four had an incomplete secondary education, and thirty had only an elementary education. The majority (67 per cent) of detectives had less than five years' experience on the job, and 28 per cent had worked for less than a year. Ideological criteria were apparently more important in selecting cadres, as an impressive 54 per cent were members or candidate members of the Communist Party (45). Filling positions in the Passport Department, which required literacy in both Ukrainian and Russian as well as good handwriting, was a constant challenge for police bosses (123).

This problem was not limited to Kyiv or to the immediate postwar years. As late as in 1956 the new Soviet minister of internal affairs, Nikolai Dudorov, revealed that

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<sup>23</sup> DAKO, 1/3/484, fol. 76.

46 per cent of the entire Soviet *militiia* staff had only elementary-school educations and that a further 42 per cent had not completed secondary school.<sup>24</sup> On top of being poorly educated, the Soviet police were also ill-trained, if trained at all. In 1947 the Kyiv *militiia* chiefs were only planning to organize a three-month preparatory course for new recruits (two hundred hours of instruction) in police duties and procedures, but they had begun looking for classrooms, instructors, and textbooks (6 and 31).

Not surprisingly, the investigation of crime scenes left much to be desired. Notwithstanding lectures about dactyloscopy in all precincts, the *militiia* rank and file only slowly adopted the use of fingerprints as an investigative tool. During the first ten months of 1947 experts were called in to take fingerprints, study signatures, or examine bullets only at eighty crime scenes; they established crime simulation in nineteen cases and helped identify criminals in another forty-nine cases. But, as the Moscow inspectors pointed out, during the same period the Kyiv *militiia* had registered 104 violent crimes and 213 aggravated thefts, all of which required the presence of experts at crime scenes (70). At the same time the only equipment experts had at their disposal was several cameras, but not even one microscope (118). Only three out of nineteen precincts had trucks, although the CID was well provided with three trucks, three cars, and four motorcycles (81).

Intelligence and shadowing techniques were also primitive. The usual way of identifying a person to be shadowed was to invite him or her to the building manager's office (112). The secret apartment belonging to the shadowing section was disguised as an office of the Ministry of Heavy Industry, which would explain the steady flow of passersby looking for employment. On top of that, a prewar resident of the same apartment moved into one of the rooms with his family (115–16). One shadowing agent did not notice his ex-wife shadowing him to the secret apartment (111)!

The living conditions of *militiia* personnel explained their high turnover rates and lack of enthusiasm on the job. Most patrolmen lived in three large barracks, while new detectives arriving from elsewhere could barely secure a room in a communal apartment (6 and 153). Rank-and-file police officers complained about pilfering and small meal portions in their canteens (170). Most K-9 instructors kept their canine assistants at home, in their dorm rooms, or communal apartments (79).

The low morale of the Kyiv police force found its expression in everything from dirty boots and irregular shaving to drinking and crimes of office. In 1947 four Kyiv *militiionery* deserted, five were fired for drinking and theft, and two were fired for corruption, and two were court-martialed for theft and desertion (154). Altogether in the first nine months of the year the city's police bosses registered 418 disciplinary infractions by their staff, including 75 cases of drinking on the job, 44 of leaving the post, 34 of being late to work, 27 of disobeying orders, 21 of rudeness towards civilians, 13 of desertion, 12 of violating the law, 11 of abuse of office, 6 of theft, and 3

<sup>24</sup> Yoram Gorlitzki, "Policing Post-Stalin Society: The Militia and Public Order under Khrushchev," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 44, nos. 2–3 (2003): 465–80, here 472; and Shelley, *Policing Soviet Society*, 32. The educational level of judges and prosecutors was also woefully inadequate, as the Soviet authorities well realized: see Solomon, *Criminal Justice under Stalin*, 170.

of consorting with criminals (196). One policeman was caught stealing from his comrades in the barrack (170)! Disillusioned policemen did not bother to hide their politically incorrect views from the Moscow inspectors. Sergeant Chaiun, a squad commander in charge of guarding the Lenin Museum in Kyiv and a Party member, declared that he could not stand living in the dorm any longer: "If I had thousands, I would buy myself an apartment, like the Jews do" (224 and 230).<sup>25</sup> The commission decried this statement as "close to being anti-Soviet" and representative of the lack of political education in Kyiv's *militsiia* force (170–71).

In the end, the Soviet Ukraine's *militsiia* bosses made all the usual promises to improve policing, but little changed until Khrushchev's reforms of the *militsiia* in the early 1960s., Report padding became even worse in the last decades of the Soviet Union's existence. Almost two years after the inspection, in August 1949, a spot check of Kyiv's Ninth Precinct by the Ukrainian MVD revealed all the same problems listed in the 1947 report: a crime clearance rate of only 75 per cent, poor work with secret informants, and widespread drinking and other infractions by policemen (281–281 overleaf). This time disciplinary actions did follow, but dismissing one station chief had hardly any impact on the life of postwar Kyiv. The preference for sweeping social-control measures over sophisticated preventative methods and efficient operative work, just like police corruption, outlived both Stalin and the Soviet Union.

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<sup>25</sup> On popular anti-Semitism in postwar Kyiv and its connection to the competition for apartments being reclaimed by returning Jewish residents, see Blackwell, "Regime City of the First Category," 354–374. On anti-Semitism in postwar Ukraine in general, see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 191–95.

*City* (1995), and *Loyalties in Conflict : Ukrainians in Canada during the Great War* (1983).

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