Hooligan

Also by Geoffrey Pearson

The Deviant Imagination

Working Class Youth Culture

edited with Geoffrey Mungham

Hooligan

A history of respectable fears

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First published 1983 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Companies and representatives throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-23400-6   ISBN 978-1-349-17076-0 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-17076-0

Typeset in Great Britain by
STYLESET LIMITED · Salisbury · Wiltshire

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For Saul Edward

Till children sniggering back from Sunday school
Know twenty ways of proving you a fool
Till hooligans have Hegel for their teacher
And every navvy own his pocket Nietzsche.

E. M. FORSTER, 1903

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Sources of Illustrations

These sources are listed in the order the illustrations appear in the book. The author gratefully acknowledges the work of the photography unit at the University of Bradford for reproducing the illustrations.

Punch, 10 September 1898; *The Daily Graphic*, 5 December 1900; *Punch*, 8 October 1881; *Punch*, 18 October 1856; *Punch*, 13 December 1862; *The Daily Graphic*, 16 November 1900; *The Daily Graphic*, 5 December 1900; *The Daily Graphic*, 16 November 1900; *Comic Cuts*, 28 August 1897; *The Daily Graphic*, 2 November 1900; *Punch*, 30 April 1881; *Punch's Almanack for 1882*; *Punch's Almanack for 1863*; *Punch*, 3 January 1863; *Punch*, 13 December 1862; *Punch*, 20 December 1862; *Punch*, 27 December 1856; *Punch*, 29 November 1862; *Punch's Almanack for 1863*; *Punch*, 21 December 1878; *Punch*, 27 September 1856; *Punch*, 10 January 1863; *Punch's Almanack for 1857*.

Preface: English Rose or British Bulldog ?

This book aims to cast some old light on new problems. It is about street crime and violence. But it is also about myth and tradition: the myth of the 'British way of life' according to which, after centuries of domestic peace, the streets of Britain have been suddenly plunged into an unnatural state of disorder that betrays the stable traditions of the past.

What I hope to show, by contrast, is that the real traditions are quite different: that for generations Britain has been plagued by the same fears and problems as today; and that this is something which should require us to reassess the shape of our present difficulties and the prospects for the future.

First, a word of apology may be in order. There is a shady confusion in the English language whereby the words 'British' and 'English' are used as if they were interchangeable. At least, this is what happens when it is the English who are speaking; the people of Wales, Scotland and Ireland usually care to make finer distinctions when talking about themselves or their close neighbours.

Hooliganism touches on a nerve of this confusion. Because, allied to the way in which the British (or do I mean English?) style themselves as the most orderly nation on earth, when trouble and violence visit the streets – as they do – there is a habitual tendency to disown this as 'un-British' or 'un-English'. It is 'not playing the game', 'not cricket', and so on.

At the moment it is black people who stand accused of disrupting the peaceful traditions of the 'British way of life',

and it has even been found necessary to import an American word ‘mugging’ into the vocabulary in order to describe such an unheard-of and un-English crime as street robbery. But the English have been blaming their violence on someone else for a century or more, and in the past street crime and disorderly conduct have been foisted on to any number of alien influences — ‘street Arabs’, ‘hot-blooded’ ruffians, the ‘offscouring of the Continent’, discharged Foreign Legionnaires, ‘Americanised’ television violence, and so on — with a particularly fixed tradition of groaning English fears about ‘Americanisation’ which stretches back to the mid-nineteenth century as part of this effort to uphold the illusion of a peaceful inheritance in which violence is entirely foreign to the English national character. Indeed, it is wonderfully apt that in a key moment of this tradition, when late Victorian London christened its own unruly offspring — who were rampaging around the streets, attacking policemen in large numbers, and allegedly engaged in regular armed gang warfare — an ‘Irish’ name was chosen, providing the key term in the discourse: *hooligan*.

It is as a result of these inescapable confusions, and not out of any sense of malice towards the peoples of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, that the words ‘British’ and ‘English’ are freely mixed throughout this book. The book has been in preparation for a number of years, and so it is not inspired by the summer riots of 1981, although these add another chapter in the long, connected history of disorder in the streets of London and other British cities. Hooliganism may be news, but it is not new. As long as we continue to believe that it is new, however, then we will be badly handicapped in our attempts to deal intelligently with the problem.

I have many debts of gratitude to people who have helped in the making of this book. In a vital sense my interest in these matters was kindled by my parents’ recollections of life in working-class Manchester between the wars — a rough old place by all accounts. I have received generous advice and hints on points of detail from Bob Ashcroft, Harry Blagg, Martin Bobker, David Brown, Barbara Castle, Mighty John Daly, Jason Ditton, Colin Fletcher, Maurice Hindle, Andrew Jacubowicz, Peter Ketley, Dorothy Lane, Phil Lee, Adrian Mitchell, Graham Partridge, Aidan Rose, Raphael Samuel,

Colin Sumner and Ian Vine. Peter Barham and Chris Barlas shared enthusiasms, and swapped agonies, on how to write usefully and creatively for our time. Stephen Collins has been an overflowing fund of inspiration and encouragement. Lorraine Hemingway endured a household threatening to be engulfed by a mountain of newspaper cuttings, photocopies and much else. I have learned from the staff and students of those colleges and universities where I have been invited to give lectures and seminars on my research, as well as conferences of social workers, probation officers, magistrates and police officers. A special word of thanks is due to the staff of various libraries who have always been courteous and helpful: Bradford Public Library, Bradford University Library, the British Library newspaper collection at Colindale, Cambridge University Library, the Institute of Criminology Library at Cambridge, Leeds Public Library, Leeds University Library, Manchester Public Library, the Police Staff College Library at Bramshill, and the Public Record Office at Kew. Without their skill and dedication, nothing would have been possible, and let us hope that the British government's passion for 'leaner and fitter' libraries — as all else — soon finds remission.

September 1982

GEOFFREY PEARSON