

## sketch

enter the country. On the other hand, the Ukrainians are seen as a people with close 'racial' and historical ties to Russia. The Ukrainian and Russian sections of international white power rock networks provide each other with the affirmation that the 'Slavs' often do not receive from their West European counterparts. This rejection has clear historical examples, e.g. in the racial ideology of the German National Socialists. Those Russians who follow this ideology have to resolve the tension between the disparaging opinion of their ideological role models towards the Slavs with their own claim to belong to a 'master race'. The Russian units that fought on the side of Nazi Germany during the Second World War, especially the Cossack formations, provide a useful bridge. For example, a picture of Ivan Kononov – Cossack leader, former Red Army major and later *Wehrmacht* colonel – adorns the split album of two South Russian

RAC bands, which in 2008 appeared on the Russian Blood&Honour division's record label. This also shows how Russian white power rock is flexible in its use of different historical symbols. However, flexibility and cultural pluralism deceive one as to the true nature of this scene's fundamental inhuman ideology.

*From the German by Christopher Gilley*

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Tatiana Golova studied sociology and works as a research associate at the University of Magdeburg's Institute of Sociology. Her research interests include political sociology, social movements, urban and spatial sociology and right-wing extremism. Her doctoral thesis investigates the role of urban spaces in the construction of the collective identity of social movements.

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MODELS OF 'TABOO BREAKING' IN RUSSIAN ROCK MUSIC: THE  
AMBIVALENCE OF THE 'POLITICALLY INCORRECT'

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*Ewgeniy Kasakow*

## analysis

*Just as in the West, provocation and taboo breaking were from the onset an essential element of the musical subcultures among Soviet – and later, Russian – youth. In itself, the existence of a youth culture independent of the state represented within Soviet society a political matter and a challenge to the dominant order. At the beginning of the 1980s, rock musicians' lyrics became increasingly political. This article will examine the interaction between politics and subculture in Soviet and Russian rock music through examples of its different approaches to aesthetic and theoretical elements, with particular reference to anti-Semitic vocabulary.*

## PROVOCATION AS EXPOSURE

Yegor Letov, the founder of Siberian 'suicide punk', has, ever since the start of his career in the musical subculture, sought to intensify the confrontation with the dominant order. While earlier rockers tried to disguise their political criticism with, as far as possible, an outwardly apolitical image, the Siberian punks' projects revealed

their political character right from the beginning. This was already reflected in the bands' names: in 1982, Letov named his first band *Posev* after an anti-Communist publishing house; *Armiya Vlasova* (The Vlasov Army), a project of his comrade-in-arms Oleg Sudakov, took its name from the union of anti-Soviet Russian collaborators during the Second World War. Letov's first big pub-

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lic performance with the band *Adolf Hitler* at a festival was cancelled due to, among other reasons, the name. In this way, Letov played with the Soviet media's accusations that placed rock alongside fascism; yet in his lyrics from that period, one cannot detect a positive assessment of fascism.

Instead, the anarchist Letov was examining parallels between fascism and Soviet everyday life,

for example in the song 'Obshchestvo *Pamyat*' ('Remembrance Society') from 1987 with his band *Grazhdanskaya oborona (GrOb - 'Civil Defence')*. To even mention the existence of anti-Semitism in the USSR and the alleged connections between the state and the primarily anti-Communist nationalist *Pamyat* Organisation was a provocation. However, Letov went further in that in his lyrics he wove his own judgements (see the line 'Dive into Muddied Waters') into the ideological language of the members of *Pamyat*, who at that time he obviously hated. The use of the word 'zhid' ('kike')

is therefore a quotation, although the placement of the slogan 'Hang the kikes, save Russia' at the end of the song seems to be an affirmative statement. It is quite possible that 'zhid' had never been used in a Russian rock song before. It is interesting that even when Letov later joined the 'red-brown'<sup>1</sup> opposition, he never made anti-Semitic comments.

1 i.e. a mixture of extreme left (red) and far-right (brown) ideologies.

DECLARATION OF APOLITICISM

The songs of *Mongol Shuudan* ('Mongolian Post') have since the foundation of the band in 1988 dealt primarily with the Russian Civil War – mainly, but not only, from the perspective of the anarchist 'Third Way'. The musicians have won many fans among anarchist circles by singing about the Makhno movement<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, a song

Grazhdanskaya Oborona (GrOb)

'Pamyat' Society

The 'Pamyat' Society and the Red Regime  
A shot in the back and the down in the soul  
The honeyed sweetness of bloody porridge  
Headfirst into the muddy spring.

The 'Pamyat' Society is Russian terror  
The finger of the righteous has found the trigger  
The people's axe has been sharpened generously  
Tomorrow is the timeless deadline.

The sabre flashed – someone's fucked  
The bayonet has gouged the hated flesh  
The 'Pamyat' Society – our hallowed father  
Leads us to kill and tear.

The reddened dawn lights the wounds  
Proud tribe, rise for the battle!  
We call you with cross and sword:  
'Hang the kikes and save Russia!'

with the infamous anti-Semitic slogan 'Kill the kikes, save Russia' in the title seems to clash with the rest of the band's work. Today it is still the subject of debate. *Mongol Shuudan* has repeatedly distanced itself from anti-Semitism and explained that the song was originally written for a film about the Civil War. However, the recordings fell into the hands of pirates and quickly found wide circulation. As late as 2009, before their Israel tour, the band stated that they would not play the song 'in concerts in Moscow, not to speak of Israel'.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, they

continue to insist that it is not a political song. However, in an interview, the band's singer Valerii Skoroded became upset that statements against the Jews cause more offence than those against other ethnic groups; he also tried in part to belatedly

2 Civil War anarchist movement led by Nestor Makhno that was active in what is now south-eastern Ukraine.

3 [http://mignews.com/news/culture/world/210509\\_235038\\_10419.html](http://mignews.com/news/culture/world/210509_235038_10419.html)

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explain away the pogroms.<sup>4</sup> (4.286)

The band Kooperativ Nishtyak from Tyumen belongs, together with Yegor Letov and Roman Neumoyev, to Siberian punk. Whereas Letov moved from anarchism to Soviet patriotism and Neumoyev propagates Orthodox Christianity, Kooperativ was to orientate itself towards occultism very early on; it regards both Christianity and Communism with equal hostility. The band's lyrics and the album art display the thematic combination of 'Third Reich – Second World War – Esotericism', albeit in an often exaggeratedly 'trashy' style. When, however, the names of Hitler, Goebbels and other famous Nazis are mentioned alongside 'Miss Bernstein', Yuri Gagarin, Aleister Crowley, Gala Dali, the serial murderer Chikatilo or Merlin the Magician, then one can say that the subject has been reduced to the profane.<sup>5</sup> The band claims to be more interested in magic than politics. However, Kooperativ's albums are often discussed in nationalist publications and the band regularly performs at events organised by Alexander Dugin's 'Eurasian Youth Union'<sup>6</sup>.

THE CONFORMITY OF AESTHETICS AND POLITICAL OPINIONS

This section deals with bands that the right-wing scene views as allies. When, for example, Moya Derzkaya Pravda ('My Bold Truth') play the 'March of the Vlasov Army', then this is not provocation but serious propaganda. Bands which have barely any followers outside of the right-wing extremist scene can hardly distance themselves or play down

<sup>4</sup> 700000 'A' v krug. Anarkhizm ot 'Mongol Shuudan', in: 'Avtonom' 2008/30. p. 11–12. Here: p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> <http://evrazia.org/article/275>

<sup>6</sup> Youth organisation in the far-right 'conservative revolution' movement.

the content of their work. However, here, too, there may be differences between the lyrics and political opinions of the artists. The dark folk project Maydanek Waltz from Ryazan sings, for example, about swastikas and the 'Heaven of the Reich', and sets music to poems by the right-wing extremist poet Aleksei Shiropaev. The cover of the album

Maydanek Waltz  
Black Sun  
'The world is like a light'  
(fragment)  
  
Your God is gold  
Our God is the sun.  
The light is like the world,  
The world is like the light.

Chernoe solntse ('Black Sun') shows the corresponding SS symbol. At the same time, Maydanek Waltz took part in a CD to remember the Soviet victims of the war which includes their Soviet song Zhuravli. Political commentaries by band members do not touch upon the 'Jewish Question' – the singer Pavel Blyumkin claims to

have lived in Israel for two years – but rather the 'Islamic expansion' into Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Among the consciously political bands who see themselves as being on the extreme right, of particular importance is the group around Roman Neumoyev, Instruksiya po vyzhivaniyu (IPV – 'Instructions on Survival'). IPV, founded in 1985 in Tyumen, was Siberian punk's most influential project. However, Neumoyev was the first in this milieu to discover Orthodoxy and position himself shortly afterwards as a monarchist. At the 'Indyuki' festival in April 1991, the IPV created a scandal with the song 'Ubit zhida' ('Kill a Kike'), which split the audience. In the following years, almost all the main figures of Siberian punk joined the 'national opposition' against President Yeltsin. Neumoyev led this trend.

The song originated with the line 'Kill a cop to get his gun'. In contrast to the 'cop', one can only kill a Jew to take the money for a gun. However, the lyrics centre on the struggle to be one of the chosen. The song is a call to kill those who defy God, that is the biblical Jacob-Israel. According to

<sup>7</sup> [www.stigmata.name/waltz.php](http://www.stigmata.name/waltz.php)

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the Old Testament, one cannot speak God's name, and as a result Neumoyev declares the unspeakable to be the unthinkable using Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus'. The basis of the hostility against the Jews is for Neumoyev the rivalry between the bogoizbannye (those chosen by God [the Chosen People], as Jews are sometimes referred to deridingly in anti-Semitic discourse) and the bogonostsy (bearers of God, following Dostoyevskii's concept of the Russian peo-

ple). However, the song does not, of course, form a rigorous theory and Neumoyev cannot be easily pigeonholed. For example, at a concert to celebrate victory day in May 2007, he refused to sing the infamous song: this was, he said, a 'day of unity, not of hate, a day of grief' for which there was 'room for both Russians and Jews'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <http://music.km.ru/article.asp?id=e6b1d0f08e8a4ae4b8009a7d84a0ca1b>

## Instrukciya po vyzyvaniyu (IPV)

'Kill a Kike'

Kill a kike to buy a gun.

Kill a kike so that you are armed.

A people that has a gun is almost invincible,

A people that has a gun cannot be turned into a herd.

Kill a kike!

Kill a kike, the madness of the heart boils, soothing the pain.

Kill a kike, in the midday sky, this is the exact same sky-blue law.

Don't ask the name of the judge, who tomorrow is your fate.

Kill a kike, to get a gun and wait for those who come to take you away.

Kill a kike!

He who struggles with God, dancing a waltz,

On the moonlit road,

On an icy spur

Burns the golden tablet.

Indeed, the murderer will be carried off into the unconsciousness of the dark

by the weightless fire.

He who struggles with God

Beyond the threshold of the stars,

Shall be saved by the inconceivable God!

Kill a kike!

## analysis

*From the German (article) and the Russian (lyrics) by Christopher Gilley*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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tural History, History and Philosophy at Bremen University. He has published amongst others in 'Konkret', 'taz Bremen', 'Neprikosnovenny zapas' (Moscow), and 'Testcard'.

FROM THE EDITORS: *KULTURA* SAYS GOODBYE

The current issue marks the end of the project 'Russian Cultural Review', produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies. It augmented the Russian Analytical Digest's examination of Russian politics and economy with a glimpse into the cultural life of the country. Unlike its sister publication, however, it could not, in the opinion of the editors, simply follow current events. The editors chose four broad areas that covered important post-Soviet changes in culture from which the material for the individual issues of *kultura* was chosen: cultural trends, public discourse, infrastructure and media, and, lastly, norms, values and symbols. In this way, the period under analysis often extended back into the Soviet era – as is the case in this issue – and the authors could explore the momentum of these processes for those abroad who were interested in these developments.

Nevertheless, unforeseeable associations with current events repeatedly cropped up: an attack on an activist of a nation-wide youth organisation just as *kultura* was presenting the group, the German opening of the 'Watch' films at the same time in which half an issue of *kultura* was devoted to them, the renewed discussion about alcohol legislation shortly before the appearance of our 'alcohol' issue, the choice of Sochi as an Olympic host city while we were planning our issue on sport etc. etc.. *kultura* can therefore, even after 2009, be seen as a form of 'monitor' of the important cultural developments of their time. The archive will continue to be accessible through the old URL or the Research Centre's homepage.

As the founding editor, Isabelle de Keghel was responsible for the beginnings; in February 2005, Hartmute Trepper joined her and, following I. de Keghel's departure in 2006, has led the project in cooperation with guest editors until the present day, in between supported for almost a year by Judith Janiszewski. At different times, Irina Prokhorova (Moscow) and Birgit Menzel (Mainz) have advised us; for a long time, Mischa Gabowitsch (now at Princeton), too, was an author, translator and the most reliable of consultants in all questions. I would also like to name Christopher Gilley (GB) as the much-praised translator into English, Hilary Abuhove (USA) as the creative proof-reader and Matthias Neumann as the tireless technical editor from the very first to the very last issue.

*kultura* first appeared in October 2005. It was planned as a monthly publication and was financed until the end of 2006 by extraordinary funds of the University of Bremen. After a half-year dry spell, the Gerda Henkel Foundation took over the financing of six bimonthly issues for one year, and then six further issues up until summer 2009. We are grateful for these two years and also that we were granted the remaining money from the second stage for the current issue.

Over 2009, our search for new funding was unsuccessful. However, we are convinced from the feedback that we have received that a medium for culture based on solid academic knowledge, written for laypeople, above all in two languages, has a firm audience – not only in Europe, but also the USA and, surprisingly, in some universities in Russia and the Ukraine. We express the firm hope that *kultura* will someday provide the inspiration for a new project.

*Hartmute Trepper*