

Punk in the CIS Countries: Way from Siberian Radicalism to West-School Activism

Stanislav Pozharnitskii

Abstract

In this article an attempt is made to describe the distinctive features of post-socialist punk, in opposite to the Western model of punk. But the Western punk is quite heterogeneous. If we delve into the problem, it will become obvious that the Czech punks have many differences from German and Estonian punks which are very different from... Swedish. The grain of punk in the most countries, originated around the same time, but germinated in very different and bizarre manifestations. The punk movement in the USSR went it's own wave, created their own tradition and proved its right to exist. The USSR died, but the punk that had been born there is still alive and it's most likely that it's creative way is still unfinished.

The punk movement emerged in USSR in late 1980s. In 1985, a document, approved by the Communist party, was published. It contained names of more than 30 musical groups from Western countries which were forbidden to being broadcast at Soviet discotheques. This was probably a first official document in the USSR in which the utter word "punk" was mentioned. Moreover, the word "punk" was used as indictment. Among others, this list contained the names of Sex Pistols, Clash, Ramones, Stooges and Blondie. Apparently, the Party workers did not sufficiently seriously take on the fulfillment of this very task. For the same reason ("punk"), Kiss and Depeche Mode were banned. Even they had nothing in common with the punk movement.

The punk movement in the USSR was born almost simultaneously with the punk movement in the whole world. Soviet punk movement had a lot in common with the American one. Thus, it developed most of his time in isolation, and was not as homogeneous as it was in the West. The punk movement in Siberia, for example, consisted mainly of people from hippie movement, so the punk community itself was relatively peculiar and self-contained. At the same time, punks from the Soviet Baltic republics were quite different from punks in London or Helsinki (regarding the style of clothing and music preferences).

In the West, the emergence of such a phenomenon as punk was a kind of protest against the dominant role of rock music, in particular, against psychedelic rock, glam rock, etc. However, at this time, rock music in the USSR didn't have such a niche, and it made no sense to protest against those streams. The opposite process happened: Mutual integration of rock music and punk

Stanislav Pozharnitskii is former doctoral student of Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic)

music. The first punk band in the Soviet Union was *Avtomaticheskie udovletvoriteli* (acronym AU), it was formed in Sankt-Petersburg in 1979. The name, in fact, reveals loose translation of the name recognized to have been the first punk horde: Sex Pistols. According to one interview, the UA's front man fell in love with punk rock after reading an article criticizing Sex Pistols in a Soviet newspaper. Ideologically, the group was far from any formulated political protest, its actions most likely seemed to have dropped down under the category of modern art-performance, closely gripped by existed Soviet realities. Despite this, the group shared many common features with the punk music: Underground house concerts, "raw" sound quality, outrageous and antisocial behavior of musicians, etc. Later, plenty of USSR's punk bands appeared. Gradually, the local scene shaped its own recognizable features, which were caused by many factors: Socio-political peculiarities of a particular region, degree of isolation from the global punk community. For example, in the Baltic States, punks could easily listen to Finnish radio and watch Finnish TV, Western and local punk music were openly broadcast. This was due to the special status of the Baltic States in the USSR. This kind of cultural affinity between Baltic punks and punks from capitalist countries provided for a swift inclusion of Baltic punks into the global community. In addition to the Baltic States, punk culture has developed in Moscow, St.-Petersburg, and Siberia. In St.-Petersburg, it was more difficult to hear voices of Western culture, if compared to Baltic Republics, but still one could do that. Records of punk music were bought by Soviet sailors who had the opportunity to buy plates abroad, they then sell them at home with a big margin. That's why the first punks from St.-Petersburg were young audiophiles who didn't think at all about political protest and war against the existing in the USSR political system. In Moscow, the state of things was similar. Punk was a fashion trend, something new and unusual. Among other things, punk was popular in the West and prohibited by Soviet ideology - precisely because of this, punk became popular USSR in 1980-ies.

As we have mentioned, the punk scene of Soviet Estonia was much closer to Western punk template. Of course, Estonia did not belong to CIS countries; However, considering Estonia within the framework in this context is very interesting. The first Estonian punk band *Propeller* was formed in 1978. From the outset, it became popular because of its British-style sound and charisma of the vocalist. Interestingly, the group even had played with a police orchestra shortly before the band was prohibited for radio broadcasting. Some of the most popular Estonian punk groups: *J.M.K.E.* (formed in 1986) and *Terminaator* (formed in 1987) were more like Western punks than *Propeller*, *AU*, or all groups representing the Siberian punk rock, for example.

Siberian punk was different (Siberia is represented mainly by Omsk, Tyumen and Novosibirsk); It was originally politicized and openly criticized the Soviet totalitarian machine. In addition to politically tinted texts, Siberian punk texts were philosophically and existentially oriented. Special attention was given to musical components of Siberian punk, this obviously was an impact/influence of the Russian underground chanson culture. First songs were recorded with acoustic guitar and incomplete drum-sets. Bass guitar and keyboards were not much used by Siberian punks. The musicians tried to compensate the obvious lack of musical instruments by their energy flow and level of poetry in their texts. Contemporary English punk-listeners, if hear these first songs of the early Siberian punk bands would unlikely understand that they listen to punk. So much their sound differed from the English and American pioneers of punk. Their music didn't look like the English punk, but it was straightforward and served as a supplement to the text. The punk movement in Siberia began in 1982, and in 1984, in Omsk, the most popular and influential Siberian punk band called *Grazhdanskaya Oborona* (or *GO*, this acronym goes for "Civil Defence" in Russian) was formed. The band was a constant KGB's object of attention, and the band members suffered from permanent pressure because they actively criticized the USSR's political regime (the leader of the band was forcibly placed to a psychiatric hospital, it was a punishment). The level of the radical

opposition of Siberian branch of the Soviet punk was amply demonstrated in the slogan of the punk movement, proclaimed by the band's leader GO: "I will always be against". Later, in 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to this slogan, the front man of the GO group will announce his commitment to Communist ideology and their support of the new Communist party.

It would be a mistake to mention only Russian and Estonian groups. We will further try to mention the most unusual and outstanding punk bands in other CIS countries.

A real punk phenomenon of its time was the Ukrainian group "Kollegsky Assessor". This band was formed by a pianist, a violinist and a vocalist in the year of 1981. The first name of the band "KGB" was formed from first letters of the surnames of the band-members (Kijevtsev, Gojdenko, Butuzov). The band performed mainly in Kiev, repertoire of the band included derisive covers - works of Russian and foreign composers. The audience remembered the band mainly because of their stage costumes. Once, this band played music in the Soviet Kiev dressed in the uniform of the Naval Force of the United States. This group was one of the first Soviet groups who had tour in Scotland (1989). This group can be attributed to a punk phenomenon, due to their approach to creativity. Of course, their songs had no electric guitars, political slogans and other familiar attributes of punk art. The group promoted the avant-garde aesthetics of punk. Punk-like approach to creativity. Thanks to one seemingly minor step, the group achieved fame and success. The band created a community "Rock-artel" with some other Ukrainian bands.

Vopli Vidopliasova (the band took its name from Vidopliasov, a character from The Village of Stepanchikovo, a novel written by Fyodor Dostoyevsky) - perhaps is the most famous Ukrainian rock band to this day, and their songs have had a tangible impact on all punk music. The band was formed in 1986. Till 1990, the band toured almost the entire Soviet Union. In 1988, "Rock-artel" was organized, it was the kind of a creative community which solve difficulties of each band in the community by efforts of all groups community members. In 1990, the band made their first European tour. Particular success was waiting for the group in France. In France, the band was offered a contract for 2 albums release. In 1991, 2 band members of VV had moved to Paris, where they had been living for 5 years, then they returned to Ukraine. The band still exists and frequently tours in Europe and in the USA.

Belarusian punk scene deserves special attention. This is not just one of others USSR's Republics. Belarus is still perceived as one of the totalitarian CIS-country. Punk in Belarus appeared later than in other Republics, so probably, Belarus has earned a status that has (at least partially). The beginning of the punk scene that emerged in Belarus in the 80-ies was far from punk in conventional sense. They existed not so long, and underwent influence of the Polish underground scene. The first truly serious punk band appeared in Belarus in 1989. Neuro Dubel was founded by two musicians in Minsk. This band can rightly be considered as a serious punk project that still exists. The band texts contain social and political criticism inherent in Western punk bands, but unlike them Neuro Dubel clothes their criticism in metaphors, as if the band tries to disguise their protest, make it non-obvious. The music of Neuro Dubel is very slow and sad, devoid of British punk energy and rebel spirit. On the contrary, their music is a model of humility, with a pronounced critical position.

The most popular band which is relevant to punk in Belarus is Lyapis Trubetskoy. The title has been taken from a character from the book "Twelve chairs" (authors Ilf and Petrov), a hack poet Nikifor Lyapis with pseudonym Trubetskoy. The band was formed in 1990 in Minsk. At the first stage, the band mostly made parodies on formulaic love songs. The second wave of the band's popularity began in early 2000, when the band completely changed their creative direction. Topics of lyrics became more elaborate. The band members changed their image. In 2007, the band issued an album named "Capital" which was full of socio-political lyrics. Homonymous video clip,

timed to album release became one of the most popular punk-oriented videos in Russian-speaking countries. In this video, the front man was depicted as many-armed deity with a piggy-bank instead of the heart. The clip-video "Capital" (starring Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and other politicians), which has become a real Internet sensation. The main goal of clip is to show the alleged destructive effects of globalization (quite Western punk style).

A common feature of rock culture (and punk culture in particular) in CIS-countries is uncertainty of their stylistic orientation. Even if a group could be roughly correlated with any particular style, most likely, in their songs, you would also find elements borrowed from other styles. It's hard to say specifically what is the reason of this style-mixing. The musicians are constantly in creative searching, they are always trying to change something, to bring something special in their music. In essence, this is punk: An attempt to try something new, unknown, something they have never dealt with.

It is easy to notice that in the names of many bands there are references to literature characters. Punk musicians in the CIS countries were not indifferent to literature. This is especially noticeable in the works of Siberian punk bands. Some of their songs are dedicated to literature. For example, in Grazhdanskaya Oborona's songs there were references to Nietzsche, Castaneda, Marquez and many local poets and writers. Maybe punk musicians partially associated themselves with the authors of the books and their characters, or maybe literature was just a source of inspiration to them. Critics of the existing regime, from well-versed extrovertism, claimed meaningfulness and objectivity. Such criticism was perceived by punk listeners differently than the outrageous cries from working class-guy musicians (this way of self-presentation was chosen by many punks in the UK). Surely, all that we see on stage is only the way of behavior of a musician, who can act completely different in real life. Thus, we must pay tribute exactly to the characteristics of the image which was constructed by a musician. Many punks in CIS countries did not reject their essence of being well-educated people, because in fact they were well educated. Some universities have played special role in the development of local punk. The Kiev Polytechnic Institute in the last decade of the Soviet Union gained fame as the smith of rock bands, including punk bands. Students of this institute at different times formed several punk-rock bands. The Institute was allowed to organize informal concerts in their premises, too. In this regard, we can say that CIS countries' punks have been experiencing a kind of role conflict. On the one hand, they were representatives of the global punk movement with their characteristic uncompromising protest, on the other hand, they gave lessons to opponents of the political system (like Soviet dissidents). Role conflict is very complicated thing by the widespread pluralism of ideologies within the punk movement itself. In the wardrobe of a modern punk, from the former Soviet Union can coexist T-shirts with band logos of Grazhdanskaya Oborona, Exploited and Green Day. Badges of all these bands can be placed side by side on his leather jacket. In fact, Siberian punk-criminals, British radical punks and fans of marijuana from California can meet each other only as images on the badges that are attached to the jacket of the punk-listener. It's possible that all of them criticize the same things, but the reasons of this criticism can be completely different. Even ideologically, these groups would be absolutely different, not similar to each other. They have nothing in common, except commitment to the punk culture. We can say that tomfoolery and performance are more important semantic component of any kind of punk, than strict political preferences.

New characters, old difficulties

By the end of 1980-ies, the punk culture in the Soviet Union faced a crisis of ideology: Official totalitarian ideology rapidly declined, yet a new one had not appeared. Earlier, the object of the protest was simple and clear, and the ideal society collectively called "freedom". Some of them meant by term of freedom the anarchy, some democracy, as in the capitalist West (as the antipode

to the Communist system). As it turned out, in those days, some of punks interpreted freedom as democracy, second group as anarchy, and others as a form of communism which was different from that, dominant in the USSR.

However, Soviet punk movement was faced with another problem, much more mundane than the loss of the object of protest. Here is the name of this problem: The world music industry. In the Soviet Union, the group could be popular by the sheer fact of its existence. Music product was in short supply, as some other products, and the average listener was deprived of choice, in fact. Of course, there was a possibility to buy records from USA, England or Germany, but it was illegal. This alternative can't be compared with the variety of choice in the new music stores, which was brought by Perestroika. In the ears of listeners from the former Soviet Union, poured hundreds of music albums released worldwide and the list of available albums updated constantly. The Western music was still expensive, but much cheaper than it had been before, and it was sold without any limitation. Significant part of the local punk-scene was not ready to such competition, especially when Western punks themselves started touring CIS-countries. Gradually (by the end of the 90-ies), punk bands from Moscow and Kiev became a commonplace in the Czech Republic, Germany and France. Overall, we can say that the process of integration of the closed USSR punk community into a global punk-movement just started. All these events mark the end of the existence of the punk culture in the USSR. From that time, a part of this culture would be irretrievably buried under the rubble of the Soviet Union. But the other part would adapt to new realities, and, over time, this part of punk-movement would deservedly take its place.

The collapse of the USSR and integration of CIS-punk communities in the global punk community definitely can be perceived as a step towards globalization of the whole punk movement. However, in the end 1990 years, lots of bands were formed succeeding early Siberian punk: Tioplaja Trassa (Barnaul), Solomennye Enoty (Moscow), Krasnyje Zvezdy (Minsk), Adaptacija (Aktjubinsk), etc. The bands of this type were formed on the territories of all States of the former USSR, these groups enjoyed local popularity, and most of them still exist to this day. As we have mentioned above, in the Soviet Union, punk lyrics had a special role. Texts of the Western punk bands were incomprehensible to a Soviet listener. Even if we put aside the language problem, they were depicting socio-political issues relevant to the Western society. These issues had little in common with the Belarussian and Kazakhstan social realities. Listeners in CIS-countries were interested in up-to-date texts. However, Western English-speaking punk is rather popular among those same listeners, but for totally other reasons. It seems, that for listeners there were two different kinds of punk: Local punk and Western one. The difference between these two punks was far beyond language differences, but in the modern world, these scenes just can't exist fully in isolation from each other. There were groups who wanted to be a part of the global punk community, but who were not willing to sacrifice their local punk-features. It's like a kind of cultural compromise. In consequence of this, it is logical to talk not about the interaction between Soviet and Western punk scenes, but about their interpenetration. Probably it is this interpenetration that's the key to the popularity of some new punk bands. One of these groups will be considered below.

At the dawn of a new era, one of the most stylistically ambiguous and at the same time the most popular punk bands in the former USSR arised. The Korol' i Shut (Russian: King and Jester) was formed in 1987, and by 1993, began touring newly appeared rock-clubs in the native St.-Petersburg. Initially, the band played horror punk (inspired by the American band Misfits), but from album to album the sound of the band included more and more elements from other styles (folk rock, hardcore, art punk, etc). In the band's lyrics you will never find a protest which is usually present in punk music. The core of the most songs were fabulous stories. In musical component, the influence of punk culture was more transparent. The result was a rather unusual mix of American

horror-punk (which was inspired by horror films of 60-70 years) and fairy tales, following the example of Slavic folk tales. By the way, the most of the "tales" were invented by the band members themselves, so they were authentic only partially, in the best cases. Another reason of their popularity was a complete political indifference throughout the lifetime of the group. It should be emphasized that only the group as a whole was political indifferent, unlike the musicians separately. Apparently, this was enough to gain popularity without linking their music to any ideology.

The punk movement in the countries of the former USSR suffered much persecution and had a difficult fate. But despite this, the punk movement gained momentum and continued to live its life. For Western punks, revolution is a mythical creature, which they most likely will never see. Soviet punks saw the revolution and reaped its fruits for the past 25 years. It has become inseparable part of the essence of post-Soviet punk, despite the fact that revolution was not their merit. Soviet punk felt primal Western origin and their belonging to the global punk community. At the same time, the Soviet punk honored his own traditions and was looking for his own path of aesthetic expression. Perhaps, duality is the main feature of the CIS-punk.

Western punk is not afraid to enter into political alliances with specific purposes. The American movement "Rock against Bush" consisted almost entirely of punks. It would be impossible to CIS-punk movement. Therein lies the main value of local punk scenes, they are always differ from the main branch of the movement. We can say that not only about the CIS-countries. In Islamic countries we can find a lot of interesting and original punk bands. Due to the closed nature of some Islamic States, and difficult access of the punk movement participants to the Internet networks, it's really hard to find current information about the band activities. Description of the Soviet punk lifestyle, the persecution of it by the authorities and all the difficulties associated with their activities in the USSR seem to be a real heroism, not all Western punks faced such problems. However, all these difficulties seem frivolous, if we pay attention to punk movement in modern Iraq and Iran. Punk band in these countries, rehearsing in the utmost secrecy, exclusively in their apartments, concerts organized in the same places. For criticism of the ruling regime the musicians continue to bear criminal responsibility.

The Western desire on the Eastern ruins

Western punk is the movement with strongly pronounced political and aesthetic components. This, according to many researchers, is the main value of punk⁴. Punk ties aesthetics and politics together. Western punk always has its own position and expresses it by all available means. Most of West punk scene is Left-wing: Anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, anti-consumerist. Punk was always inclined to attracting attention. Even at the embryonic stage, this movement in one form or another was protesting against social values, mass culture and bourgeois way of thinking. The punk identity in the countries of CIS - a question that deserves separate consideration. The front man of the first Soviet punk band (we wrote earlier about the Avtomaticheskie Udovletvoriteli band) claimed that punk existed only in the West and all punks in the USSR were not clear who they really were. The leader of the Siberian band Grazhdanskaya Oborona disagreed when someone said that he played punk music, he called it "suicidal post-shamanic action". The punk in the USSR undoubtedly was different from the Western punk. The segment that was not experiencing difficulties with self-identification, and confidently called himself punk, was generally canonical (by Western standards) punk that could withstand balance of the political and stylistic standards, but it was a smaller part of the punk musicians in CIS-countries. This kind of CIS-punk aesthetically very was precisely copying Western punk. Among the adherents of the punk culture clear rules exist: About clothes, hairstyle, way of behaving at punk concerts, etc. Musicians also adopt the canons of Western punk: It is necessary to tune the drums, what effects are supposed to use the guitar and how must be configured the EQ on bass. Of course, there are certain rules of conduct at the concert (some

of them are for listeners and others for musicians). Post-Soviet punks rather live according to a saying of Oscar Wilde: "To define is to limit". There is a vast body of groups which don't belong to the punk movement, but emphasize the influence of punk culture in their creativity. Punk from the post-USSR lands does not accept the rules of this game, he uses other framework of understanding political situations which is wider than the concepts of "pros" and "cons". Punk musicians seem to try to say: "We don't want to impose our political views to the audience. We're men who speak from stages, we already have authority. But at the same time, we're punks and we don't believe that authorities should be at all, so we leave that choice to the audience". It's the kind of the meaning-bastardizing. This is rather a peculiar way to use the DIY principle. The audience must construct their own meanings themselves. For Western punk movement, this tactic is not new. The first punk band, Sex Pistols, in fact, followed the same tactic. Although, of course, contemporary post-Soviet punks and British punk rebels put in their messages different meanings.

In describing punk rock in Russia, for example, it is important to note its penchant for dynamic change. Punk bands constantly change their sound and themes of lyrics sometimes in every new album. A vivid example of this dynamic is described previously, the Grazhdanskaya Oborona sample. During 24 years of its existence (the group disbanded in 2008 due to the death of the front man), the band started as a Siberian punk-rock with grunge influence (1980), followed to the avant-garde-noise rock with hardcore elements (1990) and psychedelic rock with elements of shoegaze (2000).

One of the main dynamic changes of this kind occurred in the early 2000s, when rock music (including all related genres) established itself as a pure commercial product. General trend of commercialization of art forced punk to find a new niche for themselves (in some Western countries, it happened 20 years before), new ways of self-expression. The punk culture began to search new artistic means of expression, obligatory condition: Non-alignment, no alliances. This can be compared with Soviet internal migration, when the creative intelligentsia was against the government, but it didn't emigrated, did nothing against the government, but also not didn't cooperate with it. Most of the modern punk bands realize the true role of protest in punk culture. Of course, there are some bands who flirt with different ideologies (Left-wing or Right-wing), and even with specific political parties (anti-government non-systemic opposition, primarily), but the vast majority of CIS-punk musicians openly do not act against governments, they just simply try to live outside of particular political trends. For this reason, the punks are doing projects at the junction of two genres and even two art forms. For instance, art exhibitions or theatrical performances and shows. This path has been chosen by a fairly well-known local band NOM from Sankt-Petersburg. Exhibitions and performances weren't commercially successful, but such a goal had not been set. It is a new field for creative implementation of punks who go beyond their usual musical activities. These actions belong rather to the art world than to the political world. For example, the actions of the famous band Pussy Riot refer rather to the politics. Though Pussy's case deserves special consideration.

Punk-prayer: The noise and the fame

Perhaps, the most resonant event in the Russian punk movement is the Pussy Riot band. This band is involved in organization of unsanctioned actions, acting on principles of anonymity. The band was formed in 2011 and initially avoided a sustainable number of members. It is unusual even for punks even with the «free» approach of the punk musicians to the creative process. All participants are represented by pseudonyms. During the shows, the members use masks that hamper their identification (sometimes the band members change each other's masks and pseudonyms). As venues for their performances, the PR group uses metro stations, trolley bus roofs, administrative buildings' roofs, and church (the most famous event of the band). Each

location was chosen by the desire to have the widest possible audience. The band tries to break down traditional ideas about the role of musicians and their perception by listeners. In 2012, three members of the band were arrested and put in jail after unsanctioned event in one of the biggest churches of Russia. It was not the first arrest of the members of the band and not their first major event. The subsequent public outcry most likely associated the venue of the action with the main Orthodox Church of Russia.

The action and the trial were really a popular news topic. According to Romir research company's data, published in April 2012, 70% of Russians have condemned the Pussy Riot's action. 64% of respondents heard about the action, while 27% saw the video of the action in the Internet.⁵ According to WCIOM Russian sociological company, 40% of Russian citizens are convinced that Pussy Riot members themselves have planned and organized the event in the Church. As many (41%) believe that in the organization of this punk action oppositionists most likely were involved. Even without considering specific opinions of ordinary Russians, the number of people who apprehend the action is very large. Taking into account rather closed nature of punk subculture, it is quite likely that this case was the first time in modern history, when a punk band became the center of attention of media and most of the Russians. Pussy Riot received positive evaluations of it's work from many Western musical groups and huge feedback from representatives of different associations located in almost every continent. Anyway, if the band's goal was to draw attention to themselves they gained it 100%. Musicians, journalists and listeners gave very different assessment of the Pussy Riot's music, comparing their music to Ramones, but most agreed that it's not the music that was priority in their "art". The lyrics are much more important. Lyrics of the band were protesting against corruption in Russian government circles, the totalitarian antics of regime, violent repression of democratic protests and against the confinement of individuals for their beliefs. At the trial, the band members claimed that they did not feel hatred to the Christians, and the action was strictly political in nature.

In fact, Pussy Riot is a punk band, which represents the values of American punk (in the opinion of PR-members, of course) and here are some formal indication to this:

- 1) The political position of the band's members is specific and exposed to the fore.
- 2) Their songs contain political-protest.
- 3) The band's popularity is based on punk performances.
- 4) They are not afraid to go into open conflict with the powers and authorities.

Pussy Riot is an American school punk band that was created by Russian activists. We can say that this is only the way the participants see what the American punk should look like. The band has not recorded songs, has not produced a single album, but achieved "merits" around the world more than any other Russian punk musician. Many Western bands spoke in support of Pussy Riot, but the West is not homogeneous. Western feminist punk movement have expressed sympathy for the plight of girls from Pussy Riot, but at the same time condemned their outrageous fashions that emphasized the femininity of the participants and divert attention from the ideological component of protest. The reaction of the punk community in Russia was surprisingly small. Perhaps, the Russian punk community was just not ready to have a dialogue. Maybe because the punk community has not got used to being taken seriously. Pussy Riot themselves repeatedly stated that they were more art-actionists than punks. Most of Pussy Riot members simultaneously were members of a left-wing radical actionist group Voina (Russian: "War"), which organized the similar actions.

Conclusion

Punk was originally imbued with innovation, but perhaps the audience just did not recognize punk in the Pussy Riot actions, or maybe just did not understand its meaning. Russian punk does

not combine art with political views in the form as it does in the Western punk tradition. Moreover, the Russian punk tries to complicate such kind of associations. That's why in the West there is an opinion that Russian punk is apolitical, but it's not true. Russian punk relationship between aesthetics and politics is built differently than that in the West, where the aesthetics of politics merged into a single artistic gesture.

The punk movement in Russia came from the West and absorbed all the elements of the dissident, marginal, and criminal aesthetics of the USSR it could have found. The punk in the USSR had their own special path and did not deviate from this path after the collapse of the USSR. If we speak on global place of CIS countries' punk in the world, it is about the same distance from democratic protests of American punks and from the flat concerts in Iran. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan (each separately) are much more tolerant to such manifestations of protest like punk than the whole Soviet Union 25 years ago. Since the collapse of the USSR, a new generation of punks appeared, but CIS-punk did not dissolve in the global punk movement completely, it constantly interacts with global movement, it partially rejects its value and partially tries to be like it. The path of the punk movement from the beginning can be described as endless chaotic change, development and reflection.

In each country, punk has incorporated the national colors, musical traditions and socio-political elements of reality. Punk in today's CIS countries bears no exception. It is a mirror reflection of the socio-cultural reality. Since it's inception, CIS-punk movement evolved with ripple effect. Each new wave experienced crises of identity and various interpretations. When this process is over, punk, as a subculture will die.

Notes

¹Gololobov I., Pilking H., Steinholt Y. (2014) Punk in Russia: Cultural mutation from the «useless» to the «moronic» (Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series). London: Routledge

² Romir Research Holding, Press release 12.04.2012 [http://romir.ru/studies/328_1334174400/]

³ An article on the speech of the Moscow Mayor at the board of the construction complex of the city "Sobyanin: Provision of housing in Moscow is the worst in both the country and the world" dated 11.08.17 <https://rg.ru/2017/08/11/reg-cfo/sobianin-obespechennost-zhilem-v-moskve-huzhe-vseh-i-v-strane-i-v-mire.html>

⁴ Gololobov I., Pilking H., Steinholt Y. (2014) Punk in Russia: Cultural mutation from the «useless» to the «moronic» (Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series). London: Routledge

⁵ Romir Research Holding. Press release 12.04.2012 [http://romir.ru/studies/328_1334174400/]

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