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**Jason Flower * Hero Dishonest * Wheel of Dharma
Marschak * Dilönis * Brigadnyi Podryad
War in Chechnya * Russia's Left & Nationalism**

The Left-wing and

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At first glance, the left-wing movement in Russia appears to be big and diverse: it is hard to find an issue of Gazeta newspaper or Vlast magazine that does not mention the Communist Party of Russian Federation (KPRF),

tions that opposed Russia's neo-liberal reforms. They were defined as left-wing mostly by analogy: Who's the chief opponent of neoliberal (contemporary capitalist) politics? Of course the left. Well, then our anti-government protesters are also left-wing. (Just to remind you, in late 1980s the press had quite commonly referred to the supporters of liberal / capitalistic transformation of Soviet society, introduction of large-scale private property and free market - pretty much right-wing liberals - as left-wing). For political analysis, for orientation in political space, we need stricter criteria to follow.

While not assuming that this definition is complete, we consider left-wing those who share generally anticapitalist views and support at least socialisation (not necessarily nationalisation) of large-scale private property. We also consider the left-wing to involve acknowledgement of socio-economic rights (for a home, food, healthcare, rest, assistance for the disabled, ill, and elderly etc., benefits, as well as freedom of occupation), viewing them as equally important and compulsory to the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association etc. Also important are anti-authoritism (which means universal elections of not only parliament deputies but also all socially important officials, including district police and market managers, as well as federalism or even confederalism of social system) and internationalism (not only is nationalism not acceptable, but also any kind of state patriotism). If somebody would view this definition as anarchistic we would gladly agree with such an opinion and would remind them that originally Marxism itself (as defined by Comrades Marx and Engels, not Messrs. Lenin and Sta-



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It's taken me over two years to put this thing together so sorry for the delay (if you were waiting) - but they were somewhat rough and somewhat adventure- and love-filled years, so, to quote Edith Piaf, non, je ne regrette rien. I love you all.

- *Szarapow*

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■ deputy group Motherland or their
■ leaders Zyuganov and Rogozin.
■ Within the media field (although
■ that is mostly online media - which
■ isn't the fault of the characters
■ themselves but of the media field
■ itself which is actively weeded
■ out by the state) you can find
■ Viktor Anpilov and Ilya Ponomar-
■ yov, as well as groups that they
■ are related to - Working Russia
■ and Union of Communist Youth
■ (SKM). You can find information
■ about Youth Left Front, Red
■ Youth Avantgarde, Russian Par-
■ ty of Communists (RPK), Russian
■ Communist Workers Party (RKRK)
■ etc. etc.
■ But the thing is that all these for-
■ mations are classified as part of
■ the left spectrum, mostly follow-
■ ing the tradition that was found-
■ ed by the press in early 1990s
■ (right after the Soviet Union col-
■ lapsed). In its turn the press fol-
■ lowed the names that the organ-
■ isations gave themselves rather
■ than their essence, and also the
■ fact that it was these organisa-

Nationalism in Russia

lin) has been quite anarchistic. Founders of Marxism, when they referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat, meant the transitional post-revolutionary form of government that was directly preceding the total abolition of the state: they viewed socialism as a stateless social system.

In our opinion, there is next to no left in today's Russia. In any case, we cannot view as such KPRF, or Stalinist organisations and groups such as Working Russia or Red Youth Avantgarde, although our article is to be mostly dedicated to them.

We owe a little explanation here. This text is dedicated to the parties, organisations and informal associations that the major Russian media refers to as left-wing, based on the historical context of their formation (Russian journalists follow a faulty logic here - if they call themselves communists they must by left-wing) and their self-positioning (self-definitions, red flags, Marxist-Leninist spells, hammer and sickle trumpery of the attributes etc.) Also covered are movements openly propagating the merging of traditionally left and right ideas. The most pertinent example of those movements is so-called national-bolshevism (which can be found both within National Bolshevik Party (NBP) as well as outside). On the one hand it cannot be included in the scheme of left and right often used by political sociologists and activists, and on the other hand it without a doubt has a remarkable influence on the deformation of the rather socially oriented values within so-called left scene towards more explicitly nationalist content. So as we choose the subject of discussion we are following not so much our own understanding of being left, which isn't quite common in Russia, but rather the tra-

ditions that are formed by the party propaganda of the leading "red" movements and by the mass media.

So-called Russian leftists are mostly relying on the Soviet legacy. Being left-wing for them means a mix of Soviet state patriotism (or even imperialism), xenophobia (anti-Semitism and hatred of the Caucasians are not the only examples, but they are significant) and opportunism in regards to the contemporary capitalist state (often they not only fail to demand the abolishing of the state, they don't even demand the socialisation of large-scale private property [1]). We won't even mention the anti-authoritism (inner structures of most "communist" organisations are deeply authoritarian); that the methods they suggest to change society with are occasionally super-authoritarian; and finally, that the constant splits in the "left" camp are evidence of the realisation in this environment of the purely leadership-based organisational principles (when the leaders fail to agree among themselves, the "proletarian avantgardes" double and triple in numbers).

Soviet past is where not only the ideological grounds for possible "left-right" union (Soviet state patriotism) are coming from, but also the first organisational attempts at it. Back in the perestroika days, the numerous parties and organisations of most different colours started to form the political blocs between communist and nationalist (occasionally explicitly "brown"). Shining examples of such unification were the joint conference of Memory (from the "brown" camp) and Unity [2] (from the "red" one) in early 1990 which was also attended by a number of trade union and Komsomol leaders, and, a year later, a conference of patriotic move-

ments under the aegis of the Communist Party of Soviet Union's Central Committee [3]. What was started in the USSR was continued in the newly independent Russian Federation. In February to March of 1992 national-patriotic parliamentary bloc Russian Unity was formed, and a little later, in October of the same year, Front of National Salvation (FNS) [4] was formed under the slogan "Justice, National Roots, Statehood, Patriotism" with the purpose of being the united left-right opposition. It featured a wide spectrum of "left-patriotic" organisations and parties such as RKRP, RPK, Socialist Workers Party (SPT), and Working Russia etc. Future leader of KPRF Genadiy Zyuganov was one of the first to sign the constituent document of the Front. Although FNS as a long-term project of left-right opposition did not work out - because in 1993 it was abandoned by many communists and then some of the right-wing - the direction of the further ideological development of the leading players of the so-called left wing didn't go through qualitative changes. Later organisational efforts to unite the left and the right were centred around the respectable KPRF (an example is People's Patriotic Union of Russia which the Communist Party used to win the nationalist votes during the parliamentary and presidential elections), as well on the level of marginal radical organisations (an example is Working People's Front formed by Anpilov's Working Russia, Limonov's NBP and Terekhov's Union of Officers to take part in the parliamentary elections in 1999 though it fell apart long before the campaign started).

However stable and lasting these unions were, it was nationalists and communists (we need to constantly remind: so-called communists, pseudo-communists, self-styled communists, commu-

nism is a world-wide phenomenon that traces its roots to middle XIX century, and 99 per cent of contemporary Russian communists have nothing to do with *actual* communism) that were drawn together. It's easy to understand the roots of this mutual attraction. It is enough to look at the metamorphoses that the concept of communism went through in the USSR. The Soviet Union's regime, as is well-known, called itself communist. But the USSR itself was an imperialistic state with an aggressive foreign policy outside the country and a totalitarian and antidemocratic one inside. Already from the mid-1940s the official ideology of internationalism was relegated to the background, with its place taken by Great Power Soviet state patriotism - a facade hiding Russian nationalism in disguise. Soon after World War II, the USSR regime employed the traditional bugaboo of reactionary monarchist propaganda - anti-Semitism. In its foreign policy, the USSR was a fitting heir to aggressive Russian imperialism. After almost completely recovering the borders of the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire, the Soviet Union went even further, establishing throughout most of Eastern Europe (with the exception of Yugoslavia and Greece, but attempts were made there as well) semi-colonial pro-Soviet regimes. These were supported by direct intervention of the USSR whenever needed.

Understanding communism in precisely this context (as an ideology of an imperialistic murderous state) and being a follower of exactly this kind of communism, it's easy to accept the idea of a union with undisguised nationalists of practically any kind (from monarchist cavemen and anti-Semitic pagans to NBP-style "left fascists"). It is also easy to understand the reciprocal aspiration of nationalists towards the

union with pseudo-reds. The thing isn't only about the services of the USSR, and personally of Stalin, to the idea of the Russian Empire, it's also a desire to reap a profit from Soviet nostalgia that is found not only in the aging KPRF electorate, but also in a new youth trend (СССР t-shirts etc.)

In the course of such long-term and mutually beneficial co-operation the so-called left have obtained (or have shown as inherent in them from the USSR times) the features that allow us to confidently characterise them as national patriots using pseudo-left rhetoric. It needs to be mentioned that the "left" are acting and developing not in spite of the country's political situation (great state idea, patriotism and even nationalism as a good style), not opposing it, and not trying to break it, but in accordance with it. They are not alone. The movement towards Great Power and nationalism is being made not only by the pseudo-left, but also by most other political powers (the notorious idea of the liberal empire). The pseudo-left have their own, special "bridge" to nationalism – the popular idea of support for "national liberation" movements in their struggle against American imperialism and Comprador bourgeoisie. It is obviously easy to move on to support nationally oriented bourgeoisie and - going further - "alternative Great Power".

It would be more convenient to show the special features of Russia's "left" in four chapters: KPRF; Small-scale Stalinists; Kremlin's Pseudo-left Constructs; NBP and National-Bolshevism.

KPRF

KPRF was formed in February 1993, at the moment when the aforementioned Front of National Salvation was going through a remarkable crisis as it lost much of its radical activist base. A little later even the more moderately

patriotic members of the Front started to flee it over time. Out of these fleeing politicians, the basis of the KPRF party apparatus was formed. This determined the national-patriotic course that is prevalent from the very beginning till now.

In his book "State" Gennadiy Zyuganov outlined the main features of the political line as he saw them. Analysing the socio-political situation in Russia at the time, Zyuganov states that "...the chief contradiction of the historical moment we experience is a contradiction between antisocial, anti-state forces that rely on Comprador capital and pursue a policy of destruction of Russia, and the state-patriotic forces whose union is just being formed" [5].

Zyuganov, who has left the Marxist roots of communist ideology far behind, describes the new synthesis of "red" and "white" as thus: "Uniting the "red" ideal of social justice, which is a sort of earthly hypostasis of the "heav-



enly" truth saying "everybody's equal in God's eyes", and the "white" ideal of nationally understood statehood, apprehended as a form of existence of centuries-old peoples' sacred things, Russia will finally achieve the desired social, inter-estate, inter-class harmony and stately power..." [6]. It's not surprising, considering such a background, that the national-state logic that dominates KPRF leaders' rhetoric is also reflected in actions of the party. While initially Zyuganov's views could be considered just one of the versions of party ide-

ology, by 1999 the “communist” leader and his entourage were quite successful in suppressing the opposition within the party. Conservative obscurantism of “Daddy Zyu” has become KPRF’s party line [7].

During KPRF’s election campaign in 2003 the party put stress on nationalist and explicitly anti-Semitic slogans. It was particularly worried by the so-called “Russian question”. In an interview for radical nationalist Orthodox Christian newspaper Rus Pravoslavnaya party leader Gennadiy Zyuganov told this of his position: “Today the patriotic slogans of the ruling regime can fool very few people. The anti-Russian, anti-Slavic purpose of the current course is getting clearer and clearer. Russian people, Slavs, and other indigenous peoples that are historically the basis of Russia’s thousand year old statehood, ended up being the most destitute and humiliated. The results of the authorities’ Russophobic policies are terrible. The population of natively Russian regions dies out 2 or 3 times faster than the country’s average. There are practically no Russians in the higher levels of power. They were driven out from management, finance, mass media”. And then: “Our people are not blind. They can’t help but see the Zionisation of state power is one of the reasons for the country’s catastrophic state, mass poverty and dying out of its population. They can’t close their eyes to the aggressive role the Zionist capital plays in the breakdown of Russia’s economy and in the embezzlement of the nation’s common property” [8]. In our opinion, speaking about any kind of leftness of the KPRF is simply inappropriate.

Small-scale Stalinists

Radical Stalinist parties / sects have tried taking over the space vacated by the official banning of the Communist Party of the



Soviet Union (KPSS) in August 1991. To an extent they have succeeded. Although the more moderate and “decent” people have gone to organisations such as Socialist Workers Party (SPT) (we can mention as an example the red dissident Roy Medvedev), the radical Stalinist RKRP and Working Russia movement were, until the founding of KPRF in early 1993, Russia’s biggest opposition organisations. As internationalist communist Marlen Insarov noted, “RKRP joins one still-born “front”, bloc and coalition with monarchists and White Guard after another” [9]. After a big communist party - KPRF - formed, took over the national-patriotic niche and lured most of the rank-and-file RKRP members in [10], the radical Stalinists (represented not just by Anpilov and Tyulkin’s RKRP, but following in its footsteps and thus not worthy of separate analysis as part of such a brief overview) got a chance to clean their red banner from brown stains. But they did bollocks. Let’s quote some more. Working Russia is promising to make businessmen “who support the national interests of Russia... directors of large companies they created” [11], come the victory. Narodnaya Pravda is outraged by the influx of immigrants and refu-

gees from CIS states into Russia and is calling for strict restrictions, for the sake of “Russia’s sovereignty” [12]. The Stalinists held on to their nationalist line throughout the 1990s. Before the Duma elections of 1999 RKRP Central Committee secretary Boris Yachmenev promised that in the Duma-to-be Working Russia will defend “national priorities in all questions and spheres” [13]. Numerous tactical unions of various Stalinist organisations with explicitly nationalist groups (Barkashov’s RNE in early 1990s, Limonov’s NBP at the end of decade) are making the picture complete. Struggle against “Zionism” has become so characteristic of Viktor Anpilov [14] that it overshadows his fight against “capital” more and more.

Kremlin’s Pseudo-left Constructs

It’s not a secret that election bloc Motherland was formed by the Kremlin before the 2003 Duma elections, in order to take away votes for KPRF, which was then the main opponents of Kremlin’s United Russia. The very signboard of the new bloc is a testament to its patriotic purpose, but it’s fair to assume that without a powerful component of this kind it wouldn’t have succeeded in appropriating almost 10 per cent of party giant KPRF’s vote. Motherland’s then-leader Sergey Glaziyev was considered a not yet corrupted politician promoting the introduction of social-market elements into Russia’s politics. The national-populist role was assigned to Motherland’s current leader Dmitriy Rogozin. But even the “moderate” Glaziyev was, in 2003, one of the signees of the appeal calling for nationally proportional representation in the authorities for Russians and other Russian indigenous people. Glaziyev signed it in the name of Russian Communities Congress (KRO) [15]. After having played his role in the electoral defeat of



Limonov

KPRF, Glaziyev had to leave Motherland and seek new allies, but Rogozin stayed, and it is he who now plays the role of safe, ostensibly left-wing "opposition" for the Kremlin. While standing firmly on "national ground".

NBP and National-Bolshevism

We conclude our article with a chapter on National Bolsheviks, not because they are the last in line, but rather the other way around. We think them the phenomenon most dangerous for the internationalist ideas that grew in the last ten years on the field that's mistakenly but traditionally perceived in Russia as left-wing. Everything that is represented in the ideology of the previous groups as unfinished, not quite formulated and fragmentary, has found its full development in National-Bolshevism.

Why do we cover NBP, Russia's chief mouthpiece for National Bolshevik ideas, a party whose main slogan is "Russia is all, everything else is nothing!", in the article about Russia's left wing? It's hard to pass by a party that has armed itself with a full range of "left-wing icons": Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Che. A party that chose the hammer and sickle as its emblem. A party that has been actively trying to make friends with practically all left

groups, so-called and not, from Stalinists to anarchists.

Unlike KPRF, RKRП etc. whose electorate and membership is more or less dying out, National Bolshevik Party has been aimed at the youth from the very beginning. Vivid hooligan slogans and actions, reliance on scandals and shock, have attracted into the party ranks the people who hardly have any political convictions at all. But that's OK for the NBP, because the party members get supplied with the "correct" views once within the party, not before entering, which would've been the case were the "adult" logic of the communists and Stalinists followed. The youth saw nothing unusual and wild in the eclectic

fragmental mixture of communist and fascist ideas, based on the promise of freedom from parents' care and sexual revolution (up to the introduction of the polygamous family [16]). This eclecticism has in ten years of NBP's existence become a sort of tradition in its own right, has developed supporters, propagandists and some kind of (pseudo)scientific computation.

"The Natsbol [17] is "right-wing," - writes Yevgeniy Prilepin in issue 4 of NBP-Info which was published especially for the NBP ideological conference in the Spring of 2004. "The NBP is an heir to one and a half thousand years of Russian history, and it's responsible for this heritage in the future, but not to the "liberal humanitarian values" and not to the international. Natsbol's "leftiness" is so wide that it includes a lot of "right-wing" values - at least a cult of nation and power - Natsbol is a "left-wing" fascist" [18]. He is echoed, also in NBP-Info, by Marina Kurasova: "We have united to fight for social and national justice, to protect the interests of Russians in Russia and abroad, to transform Russia in a revolutionary manner, to destroy the old world and to build the Other Russia. We are ready to destroy the power of the bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, ethno-criminal [sic] groups, smash the police state



and external enemies such as NATO, USA and foreign capital" [19]. And finally, most explicitly: "Without a doubt, NBP is still hauling Russia's "left-wing" movement on its back - so far it makes sense against the background of social discontent. But our main precepts - regarding the complete change of the political line - are much more important than any "left-wing" components in national-bolshevism. NBP also hauls the "right-wing" movement [...]" [20]

Unlike Hitler's NSDAP, Russia's NBP has formed not within the right-wing discourse, but within the left-wing, and is still partly within this framework. It has become possible, in part due to the activity of various mossy Stalinists who, from the start of perestroika (or even before it began - Molodaya Gvardiya magazine of later Soviet era can be recalled), have been actively introducing right-wing imperialistic and nationalist ideas to the left-wing legacy. That the results of their years-long labour has been used by a dynamically growing and active party with youth membership and an obviously eclectic and flexible program which is as gutta-percha as it takes to camouflage the pure will for power, seems like a fair punishment for those who practiced unscrupulousness in allies and tolerance for nationalism.

Now, when the NBP, one of the few active and not just "talking" political organisations, has temporarily armed itself with generally democratic and human rights slogans, the human rights activists and liberals seem to face a temptation that many of them cannot resist. If somebody thinks that the National Bolsheviks are going to play fair, they are in for a bitter disappointment. Natsbols do not shun mind manipulation: "...it shouldn't be shunned because political struggle is unthinkable without real propaganda (it

would be unnecessary to give examples of Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini)" [21]. And further: "National Bolsheviks should understand that saying "yes" today and "no" tomorrow to the same question is better than expressing "neither yes nor no" both times..." [22].

What's Left?

Besides, we have only few internationalists left who are united in microscopic groups which the background of micro-political splits have sometimes reduced to 1 or 2 people-strong; dogmatic communists who aren't only unable to unite with anyone at all, but are also using rhetoric that can only be understood by specialists; nimble Trotskyists who are willing to unite with, or more precisely "enter" (in order to take over them) any big structures, whichever comes along, even the KPRF, but aren't really considering independent political action; anarchists who seem to have a tendency to drift towards harder communist or Trotskyist positions, are partly concerned with animal rights more than with human rights, and are partly enveloped by artistic and musical subcultures to the extent that they are almost completely depoliticised.

But if there's anywhere in Russia that the nationalistic "big lefties" can be criticised from the left, it's from these circles. And if Russia's internationalist left has any kind of perspective, it is, in our view, in the unification of the ideas that these micro-political circles discuss, combined with youth energy, eternally renewed, generation after generation. What lacks now is just subjects for such a unification.

[1] The head of Rosagropromstroi corporation Viktor Vidmanov, who is one of KPRF's oldest sponsors, in his report to the plenum of KPRF Central Committee stated: "...the term "nationalisation shouldn't be interpreted as expropriation. Nationalisation is the

flipside of privatisation". (Коммунист. 1999. Июль - август. №4 (1407).

[2] All-Union society "Unity - For Leninism and communist ideals" is a Stalinist organisation that existed in 1989 - 1993, headed by Nina Andreyeva.

[3] For more details see: Шавшукова Т. Феномен "красно-коричневых" // Российский фашизм и коммунисты-интернационалисты. Астрахань, 1998.

[4] FNS formed as a movement in 1992 but was only registered by the Ministry of Justice in March 1993.

[5] Зюганов Г.А. Держава. М., 1994. С. 16.

[6] Ibid. С. 124-125.

[7] For more details see: Кагарлицкий Б. Реставрация в России. М.: УРСС, 2000. С. 318.

[8] The text of Zyuganov's interview with Rus Pravoslavnaaya editor in chief Konstantin Dushenov can be viewed at www.rusprav.ru/2003/9-10/rp75-76_8.htm.

[9] Инсаров М. КРП // Бугера В., Инсаров М. В борьбе против буржуазного национализма. М., 2002. С. 143.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Working Russia's 2nd Congress, April 23, 1994. See: Васильев Г. Кто и за что финансирует КРП? // Рабочая демократия. 1994. № 5(20).

[12] Русакова А. Есть ли у нас суверенитет? // Народная правда. 1993. № 6(60).

[13] Трудовая Россия. 1998. № 14(95).

[14] Шавшукова Т. Феномен "красно-коричневых" // Российский фашизм и коммунисты-интернационалисты. Астрахань, 1998. С. 24.

[15] See "Call for unity of patriotic forces": "We commit ourselves to doing everything to [...] strive for constitutional means for proportional representation of Russians and other Russia's indigenous people in all administrative structures of the country". www.atvr.ru/opinions/2003/5/5/873.html.

[16] Лимонов Э. Другая Россия. М., 2003. С. 24.

[17] Natsbol is short for National-Bolshevik.

[18] Прилепин Е. Глубже корни - выше дерево // НБП-инфо. 2004. № 4. С. 8.

[19] Курасова М. Кости и мясо н-б идеологии // Ibid. С. 2.

[20] Прилепин Е. Глубже корни - выше дерево // Ibid. С. 8.

[21] Курасова М. Кости и мясо н-б идеологии // Ibid. С. 2.

[22] Ibid. С. 3.

VOLJA

Volja (Russian word meaning "freedom" and "will") is an international anarchist paper that was founded by several anarchists in Moscow in 1989. From the very beginning and throughout its history Volja was a sort of "additional" publication for Moscow-based anarchists, or a "replacement" paper that was issued during the times of the main publication's crisis. This can partly explain the long periods of silence between issues.



The "international" character of the paper, manifested in its subtitle, has a complicated set of reasons, including the fact that editorial collective consisted and still consists of people from various nations, the desire to cover political and cultural events as well as development of anarchist and liberation ideas internationally, and not recognizing state borders legitimate, as they are becoming more and more transparent for goods while the people have a hard time getting through.

Volja tried to cover and intends to keep covering the protest and liberation movements in political, social, gender, environmental, cultural and other spheres of life, the most interesting events and phenomena that are relevant for the former USSR territory at each particular issue's publishing date. Volja does not follow any organization's "party line" but it keeps an eye or two open for various individuals, groups and movements of anarchist,

libertarian and anti-authoritarian left orientation, including antiwar movement and movement against the capitalist globalisation. It is worth noting that in 1989-1990 Volja has been a companion paper for anarchist magazine Obschina ("Community"). There were 49 issues and 3 unnumbered special editions of Obschina published between 1987 and 1993. In 1994 and 1995 Volja was being published to at least partially cover the emptiness that existed after Obschina stopped publishing and

before another new big publication took off. Volja was temporarily halted as some of the collective's members took part in publishing anarcho-environmental paper Hraniteli Radugi ("Rainbow Keepers") - issues 6 through 10 in 1996 and 1997. Then the attention was turned to Utopija ("Utopia") magazine: issues 1 and 2 in 1998 and 2,5 as a part of compilation zine Evrobulyka ("Eurobottle") in 2000. When Utopija temporarily ceased to be published, Volja has been revived in 2000, the year that the Moscow anarchist movement has been relatively active. In autumn 2000, at the suggestion of the editor of Moscow's anarchist paper Anarhicheskij Vestnik ("Anarchist Courier"), the failed experiment of merging Volja with Anarhicheskij Vestnik started - it did produce one issue of "urban counterculture and antipolitics magazine" Asfal't ("Asphalt") in March 2001. Volja's 15th issue has been provoked by the hostage crisis in Moscow; the simultaneous analysis of the events (the issue was published on October 24, 2002) was combined with materials that were chosen for another publication due to be released in September 2002 that failed to materialize. The latest issue at the moment is 23, from February 2005.

If you want to contribute articles, comments, pictures, or anything else you feel is relevant, you can contact the editorial collective at volja@nm.ru obschtschina@pisem.net Vladlen Tupikin, PO Box 80, Moscow M-208, 117208, Russia. www.volja.nm.ru

DILÖNIS

N.D.A. / DILÖNIS 1990-1994

N.D.A. (NAC, DILONIT, APSEDIES) starts its existence when Maris & Edzs (living in the same neighbourhood) come together. First rehearsals, using mainly only acoustic guitars take place in Edzs' flat, and in year 1990 the first record «Istabas Balss» («Voice Of The Room») is released and given to friend for evaluation. Since they borrow the drum set from a band called Mezs (Forest) the rehearsals for some time take place at a boiler room of kindergarten «Marite».

From year 1991 rehearsals take place at a guard shack of new hospital of Kuldīga, where all the band members are working as guards. (Edzs - voc/guit, Maris - voc/bass, Guncha - drums). They rehearse often and regularly, but almost without any real equipment. However in spite of it some of the rehearsals are recorded and the band works on performance pro-

gram. Their first performance takes place at a festival of new rock musicians at Iecava, year 1991, together with bands like IBM & I, Tukša Muca, Inokentijs Marpls, Bindeman etc. During this time N.D.A. performs also propaganda / informative activities in KAMP-PA union, and thanks to that have good contacts with other musicians and underground activists. After the Iecava gig N.D.A. is being invited to play at almost all underground gigs of that time in Latvia. Thanks to activists of musician association «Tornis» the first demo «Tapeç, Ka Es Ieskreju» («Because I Ran Into...») is recorded.

As some of the most interesting events of this period of time the Lithuanian tour (Venta, 1992) of some Latvian bands including N.D.A. must be mentioned, also the 1st September students' party at Jelgava together with the disco «Ventas Dzirkstis», and the unforgettable performance at a Christian children summer camp at Zvirgzdu lake. In year 1992 the band starts having problems with space for rehearsals - for some time they rehearse at Pioneers House of Kuldīga but after N.D.A. organises a gig and a following happening for themselves and ~40 fans on Jani evening, they are asked to leave. After some time they are allowed to rehearse at the club of the Local Consumers Union, and so it goes on till the moment when someone throws out a couple of club chairs from third floor window. Consequently N.D.A. is asked to rehearse somewhere else. In the same year together with The Spine a new place of rehearsals - VÖNS - is found, placed at an attachment of a building built in 17th century. Soon The Spine leaves, and N.D.A.

rehearses together with a new band - Vihers. Guncha starts skipping the rehearsals more and more often and is replaced by Mishkins, and the record «Gott Mit Uns» is brought out.

After a little while Maris & Edzs leave for Riga and the rehearsals take place both in Riga and Kuldīga with various bass players (Gedra, Viesturs, Tarass). The name of the band is shortened to DILÖNIS and another bass player is engaged - Martins Lablaiks (ex-Tukša Muca etc.). For a little while brothers Viesturs and Roberts Irbes take part in the band. In year 1993 Struhs (ex-Vihers) becomes the second bass player of DILÖNIS. DILÖNIS plays at various gigs from which the best are in Liepāja at the Cultural Castle of Metal Workers and at the basement of Kramu str. in Riga.

Many songs recorded at gigs/other places are included in underground compilation tapes from various countries.

In year 1993 to solve the chronic drummer problem, Edzs chases the guitar to drums and the band proceeds without a new guitar player, leaving two bass guitarists (Maris & Struhs). It seems the only band from Latvia who played like that at that time, also the style changes from punk rock to something short, fast and humorous. This setup of the band stays the same for the last two records and live shows in Liepāja and Riga. In year 1994 the band splits up. Struhs & Edzs create Vonosonolop-pus, Maris - Capajevs Vagons.

Pictures and bio taken from www.nekac.lv - it also has info about other projects by DILÖNIS ex-members. Postal address: Maris Muitenieks, Rumbas 6-12, Kuldīga, LV 3300, Latvia





This interview originally appeared in the first issue of Russian-language zine from Riga, Latvia «Bezumets» and is dated May 1994. The zine's former editor Kone can be contacted through email kone@re-lab.net.

Maris - bass, voc
Struhs - bass, voc
Edgars - drums, voc

? - How often do you get an urge to give everything up and what are the reasons for that?

E: To me, frankly speaking, very rarely.

S: Sometimes, when we're playing and then not playing, playing and then not playing. We just have to be playing all the time.

M: In my opinion, alcohol is one of

the reasons. You drink for three days or so and then you don't give a shit about anything. Everything is disgusting. Life is a PROBLEM. Sometimes when I want badly to do something, I feel a lot of energy inside myself, but as I feel the people's indifference everything starts to seem unimportant, it's like beating your head against the wall. Fuckup.

S: But sometimes the fuckup happens just so, from nothing...

E: For about two weeks after the gigs I don't usually want to do anything, but then it's alright.

? What are the main reasons for disagreements between you?

S: Drinking!

E: Alcohol.

M: Occasionally some disagreements in our views...

E: ...but they're not serious.

M: I think that there are enough problems around us, and we try to do without them among ourselves.

E: Musically there weren't such big disagreements, it can be called our principle of creative equality.

M: Yes, ha-ha, if two people are «for», then the third should agree, ha.

? What is your professional level, in your opinion? Are you interested in that? Would you like to learn to play better?

M: Yes, of course I'd like to learn to play better, but I'm just lazy.

E: I'm playing on an amateur level! I'd like to learn to play second bass drum.

S: And I should play fast!

E: So, we don't have that professional level. But I don't think it's necessary. For us it's most important that we had our, how to say it, like, style, our own face.

S: And that's our level.

? Do you plan to make a studio recording? Or you are rather into self-made sound?

E: Yes, we'd like to but we have no means for that. And if we would be doing such a recording we probably wouldn't get what is necessary because there will always be someone who would be teaching us, fucking our brains. This man should be 100% into what we're doing, or else we're doing 100% ourselves. So we are rather into self-made recordings. It will naturally be worse technically, but better in all other aspects.

M: We play the kind of music that will simply not sound right in good quality, something is lost then.

? Name three favourite Latvian bands and seven fa-

vourite albums by foreign bands.

E: INOKENTIJS MARPLS, I can't name anyone else at the moment. It seems RAF will be alright, I used to like them a lot in the past. And also I haven't heard 33-H LETNIJ PODONOK.

M: To me, also INOKENTIJS MARPLS, I don't know what else. Ah, at the last gig I liked EJ DIRST, but generally I don't have a favourite band in Latvia. And also I like N.D.A.

M: SEX PISTOLS / DISORDER / WOUNDED KNEE / TURBO REANIMACIJA - «Play Loud» / «No Sanctuary» zine / G.G. Allin / STRES/LOS CRUDOS.

E: DISORDER / LANDLORDS / SHITFIT / INOKENTIJS MARPLS / LOS CRUDOS / «Maximumrocknroll» / «Colgate» toothpaste / HUASIPUNGO / NOMEANSNO / TURBO REANIMACIJA / ERKE MAISE / G.O. / ARE YOU A MAN OR ARE YOU A MOUSE?

? What problems around you are you interested in?

E: The same problems as everyone else has, to survive and not to die.

M: Yeah, life's a problem - to find money, to expand our scene, to make possible that everybody had a place to play, to keep the spirits high.

E: But all that is hard to do in our town.

? What do you call punk / HC music?

E: Well, how to say it, that's about what (in my understanding) bands like SUBTERRANEAN KIDS, DEAD KENNEDYS play, it's not punk and not hardcore, it's something between that. I'm personally interested in punk / hardcore and hardcore.

M: And I'm into good music - be that punk or hardcore and good grind and noise.

S: I'm into such fast stuff with all kinds of dillies.

? Do you like that punk has become very popular in the last two years? Why do you think that is happening?

S: Is it popular?

M: Time is like this...

E: It is, I think, a passing trend that will leave traces. There's a lot of such people - tore up the pants, put on a leather jacket, made hair up - and to the gig. And there -

nothing matters, only just to get drunk and all. Then home, wash, put on different clothes - and until the next weekend.

M: Of course it's not bad that there are more and more people coming to concerts, but punk isn't alcohol and drugs.

E: It's not just music! It can be anything at all...

M: For instance, sports tournaments.

? What do you do when you are stoned?

E: I like to go to stores most of all, talk, I go to drugstores, I'm scared out in the streets. Ah, I like eating!

M: I like to get kicks, laugh, eat, watch telly, listen to music. I like cinema, but I can't remember anything afterwards.

? Do you have a plan for all life?

M: My plans change very often. No plans. But I have ideas for things I want to do. But often it breaks down. I like dreaming.

E: I don't want to get old.

M: I want to play a lot and perform more often, so the punk / hardcore scene would blossom. So that people would be merry and happy.



BRIGADNIY PODRYAD

One of the best-known underground punk rock bands in Leningrad in the late 80s. They were combining powerful '77 style punk with biting social and political commentary - one of the few early bands to do so. Still around, and still playing old-fashioned punk rock.

BRIGADNIY PODRYAD ("brigade south") formed June 1986 in South Leningrad district of Kupchino. The initial lineup has been: Kolya Mihailov - vocals, Alexandr "Santyor" Lukianov - guitar, Maxim Vasiliev - guitar, Dmitriy Babich - bass, Igor "Said" Saikin - drums. The band recorded a self-titled album in the home studio of Fyodor "Begemot" Lavrov, guitarist of another pioneering punk band NARODNOE OPOLCHENIE. Then Santyor got drafted and the band got on a hiatus. In 1987 a new guitarist, Yura Sobolev, joined and became the primary songwriter. The band joined the Leningrad Rock Club and made a noisy appearance at the L.R.K. 6th annual festival in 1988. Then Babich and Said quit the band (Said had died in 1998) and BRIGADNIY PODRYAD split up again. Yura Sobolev formed his own band DOHLIY NOMER with bassist Sasha "Kon'yak" Muraviov and drummer Valera Trushin. When Kolya Mihailov joined, it became the new BRIGADNIY PODRYAD lineup. In 1988 an album was recorded at "NCH / VCH" squat (it's been issued in 1998 on tape), in 1989 - another one called "Chlenskiy Vznos", with a saxophone player they'd found on the street. All in all, until 1990 BRIGADNIY PODRYAD played just a dozen gigs in Russia and Ukraine but their influence still has been really big. In Summer 1990 another hiatus started.

The band were no longer playing gigs, just recording home albums with stuff that could be called lo-fi

pop with anti-social lyrics. Besides the old BRIGADNIY PODRYAD folks a schoolboy named Sasha Konviser was taking part. In 1996 an old friend Anton "Tosya" Soya got Santyor, Konviser and Mihailov together again to record a few of his own songs, which eventually led to BRIGADNIY PODRYAD reunion. The band was joined by Igor Mosin (ex-DURNOYE VLIYANIE, BONDZINSKIY) on drums and Dima Petrov (ex-DURNOYE VLUYANIE, BONDZINSKIY, now GRAND SHUTTLE BANDA) on bass. Then Kolya Mihailov fell down somewhere and got brain damage. Konviser has become BRIGADNIY PODRYAD's sole frontman. Santyor was eventually replaced by Yura Sobolev who was for a while playing in pop band PANGEYA. Mosin and later Petrov quit, but the band was joined by Igor "Motya" Motovilov from NARODNOYE OPOLCHENIYE. Sobolev switched to bass and later quit though Santyor took part in some of the later lineups.

Yura Sobolev interviewed by Olga Axyutina, November 16, 1998. Taken from the book "Pank-virus v Rossii" (Punk Virus In Russia) by Olga Axyutina, Moscow, 1999, pp. 175-181.

Translated by Szarapow.

? When and how did your band start?

- BRIGADNIY PODRYAD formed in June 1986. They'd recorded an album at home studio of Fyodor "Begemot" (BEGEMOT) which Fyodor produced, and then the guitarist had been drafted.

The first lineup has been like this: Said (Igor Saikin) on drums, Dima Babich - bass guitar, Kolya Mihailov - vocals, Santyor (Sasha Lukianov) on guitar.

He was drafted, and at about the same time I came back from the

army and started recording some little songs on my tape recorder, through the friends it reached Begemot, and PODRYAD was quiet at the time, they were looking for a guitarist. So I was offered to them, we met right after the New Year and started to rehearse right away.

For the Summer I went to a pioneer camp to get some kicks, everybody was minding their own business, and I thought that it all quietly died because from January until Summer we rehearsed but didn't play a single gig. When I got back it turned out that Said with two musicians from some band played at some little boat. Said wasn't so much a drummer as a showman - a bundle of energy. He turned everybody on all the time. But as a drummer... He drummed with the same speed (laughs) and he physically couldn't play any faster, but still he managed to organize a debut concert - at Gaz House Of Culture I think. A nightmare of a concert. The factory girls went to a discotheque with their lads, and there are some folks they couldn't understand, trying to play something. That was in late 1987.

Then I went to work at a House Of Pioneers' theater complex (I was always working in theaters as a fitter or stage machinist). So everything got quiet again. But I had some backlog of songs and I simply went to Babich. Babich bought a reel to reel tape recorder and we were recording it all live. In general, it was a nightmare of an album. Kolya played bass, Babich drummed, I played guitar and at the same time sang - all of us were doing someone else's work. And about half of this album was included in the new PODRYAD set. So with this old set from 1986 we joined the Rock Club in spring of 1988, after NARODNOYE OPOLCHENIYE. And our gig

was marked by a good fight (laughs) between Pushkin from FRONT and Titov from AQUARIUM. Everything went on like this.

There were three bands that were supposed to be "the hope of young Leningrad rock" - NARODNOYE OPOLCHENIYE, DURNOYE VLIYANIYE and BRIGADNIY PODRYAD. But the people in PODRYAD were so uncontrollable that it couldn't go on well. What's more, our singer was Nikolay Mihailov's (the president of Rock Club) namesake and there was always something happening. (laughs) For instance, the sexually transmitted and skin diseases prophylactic center was looking for Kolya or the police was going to fine him for some shop-window he broke - and all the papers were going to the Rock Club. [...]

The normal gigs that can be marked were at Rock Club (we once played at their big hall) (laughs) and the Winter Stadium at the VI Festival of Leningrad Rock Club.

But the gigs generally were a nightmare. No one could play - no practice. We rehearsed at apartments. All the rehearsals were twice a month or 3 times in 2 months. (laughs) And they tended to end with someone calling for police to disperse us. No one had proper instruments.

Then I met the band TAINOYE GOLOSOVANIYE ("Secret Voting"). Their singer Sasha nicknamed Kon'yak also played bass, I invited him to try something. We were trying all kinds of singers. Nothing worked. In the Autumn Begemot gave me a phone number of Valera Trushin - he was about 17 then. He turned out to be a very energetic drummer, he grasped everything quickly. He grew up literally in three months from a zero level. So the three of us... I wrote enough new songs for a 40-minute set. While we were looking for a vocalist I sang myself. We found a singer - he squealed

BRIGADNIY PODRYAD live 1988
(Dmitry Babich and Kolya Mihailov)



some heavy metal stuff. He came to the rehearsal and then disappeared somewhere. It turned out that he was stabbed by a knife when he was coming back home. As always, you don't have a smoke when you need it.

Well. The late eighties were a gloomy time as far as gopniks (=rednecks, jocks) are concerned.

Kolya Mihailov once came to our rehearsal - just to see what we were doing. (PODRYAD was on a hiatus then). He listened and said: "Lemme sing". He sang. We started to think about the name. We were called DOHLIY NOMER ("Dead Trick") before that. And Kolya said: "What are we thinking? Let's call ourselves BRIGADNIY PODRYAD".

And Dima Babich (after the stadium gig he developed some nervous disease, and he left the band) went nuts step by step. So it happened that Kon'yak joined PODRYAD.

? Why did you decide to take such a name ("Brigade Contract")?

- The band was all made of slogans. All the refrains were the slogans that Gorbachev invented. For instance, "Sobriety is a norm of life", all that perestroika stuff. The band was social, topics of the day. Songs had titles like "Public Feeding".

We then had to translate the name

for Germany (laughs)... For foreigners it's totally unpronounceable.

Then we said to Said: "C'mon, you'll now be our manager, and Trushin will play drums". Said refused and he got offended, as it always happens. So thus we had the lineup. The most active period - it was 1989. A young man full of ambitions and complexes, Pyotr Novik, came and started to establish himself. He was organizing us gigs, out of town gigs. He made us three out of town gigs. For the first one he went with a friend who was hiding from our crew in the corners. We got settled in a women's hostel, on the 1st floor. We started a pillow fight right away. All the pillows flew out the window. (laughs) After this debauchery we were moved to a hotel where we naturally broke everything in the end.

We got so drunk there... I can't remember how we went on stage. The concert didn't happen. (laughs) We didn't have the sound switched on 'cause there were only some obscenities heard from the stage. The people were getting kicks. I can't remember how we got back to the hotel either. At the night SOBAKA TSE-TSE (the band we went with) woke us up: "The police is coming for you, let's move". So in the night we went through these dark side-street - and the gopniks were also there,

at night they don't have much to have fun with... we all returned on different trains.

Then in Summer 1989 we went to Kalinin (*now called Tver*). We arrived on Sunday. We see - the river embankment, and gangs of grown-up men fight among themselves. We stand there and can't understand anything. We ask the passers by - it's the city day, people's festival, no one gets involved with that, the people are having fun. And they have a big sports complex there. We go inside - the stands, a stage, but no equipment. We're thinking: "Wow, cool! What a big hall! But when are they going to put the equipment?" We had to play in 4 hours. We go out into a foyer and there's this small stage, and a piece of fabric hangs that says, in foil, "Our Discotheque". (*laughs*) And so we had to play there. Which we did.

And after that there was the best thing - Kahovka (*in Ukraine*). We got there by plane. We were met by a Volga car from the Regional Committee of Communist Party. We were given a central room at the floating pier there with a half-room window on the whole wall. What was groovy there was wine that cost 1,1 ruble (*cca. \$1,8 by official exchange rate; average monthly salary was between 100 and 200 rubles then*). We bought 17 bottles of that wine and got wasted the first day we arrived. Then we played a good gig, the people dug us. But in the evening the guys got drunk and went to kick up a row on stage. The headlines were MATROSSKAYA TISHINA ("Sailors' Silence") from Moscow, they were filmed by local TV. So our guys got on stage, started trying to sing along, snatching the instruments out of their hands, like, "C'mon let's jam together". We got deprived of a right to perform at the final concert of this Serpen festival. [...] So we're sitting there, the mood isn't great. Nothing to do. We swam there, though. Making fun of Pyotr. Every

morning we ritually threw Pyotr into the Dnieper. We sit there on our suitcases, the bands are rocking out and then these members of the Komsomol run to us: "C'mon, run, you got a permission to perform". Everybody played, and the people screamed all the time: "We want BRIGADNIY PODRYAD from Leningrad", so they let us go.

Back home we made a rehearsal room at NCh / VCh squat, a fan of a band helped us put it together. The instruments were very hard to get then. A stinking "Diamand" guitar cost 600 rubles. So almost no one had good instruments. For a couple of years I played "Aelita" guitar, okay. Then I bought a Czech "Star 7", then a "Diamand". As for the other equipment, it was trouble. I ended up entering a forged marriage and for the money from that I bought the "coffins" from ZOOPARK.

And everything's got powerful in a moment. In May we recorded an album at that NCh / VCh. And another one in the Autumn. At that squat many bands rehearsed - mainly underground and basement collectives - thrashers, metalheads, young punks. YUGO-ZAPAD was in the next room. [...] All that was done by Boris Sumarokov - with a bundle of papers and receipts. So, for instance, the cops come to kick out and arrest everyone. The folks get Sumarokov: "Help us". He digs in his bundle: "There". Another question: "What's with Sanitary Epidemiology Station?" Etc. He had all the papers. In the Winter everyone sits and rocks. Dark, the light was often switched off. And in the Spring you go there, and some greenish, very thin, totally tattooed punks, metalheads get out from the basement, like a tired butterfly, sitting by the wall. It was a terrible thing to look at. It had to be filmed. That squat existed for some 18 - 24 months.

And PODRYAD... No one did anything new, everyone was very passive. I did one gig at the House

Of Culture Of Workers Of Food Industry - I spent so much nerves, energy, and at the end the people thrashed the hall, and for some reason the band had to pay - a 300 ruble fine. For us it was a lot of money. The drum set was arrested as a guarantee. So everything died away. A tour in Germany broke down - we didn't have the passports and money.

There was a German girl named Sabine who was taking the young talents abroad as cultural exchange - VOSTOK-1 (Gusev's project) and DURNOYE VLIYANIYE had to go. One of them couldn't go so PODRYAD was recommended. The German band MIX DOUBLE came here. We had to play together, and we're specific people - horrible looking and all... The Germans were shocked: "They're right-wing extremists". [...] But we were very apolitical and no one was anyone. Yet they were shocked: "They're some crazy people". They called us right-wing and cancelled the invitation.

I got very upset then and I thought I won't call anyone, let them call themselves when they would feel like it. So for 5 months no one called, and I sold our rehearsal room with all the equipment, decided to leave the music. So everything ended in 1990.

Valera Trushin formed BIROTSEFALY, Kolya recorded albums with the lads at home. And I was making solo recordings - I made a lot of them, 'cause the tape recorder could make 4 overdubs. [...] With old PODRYAD I didn't get anything except nervous wreck. I had such a negative attitude, I didn't like the audience, and all... I'm a homely person, to be honest. The heck do I need all these adventures. There were situations with Kolya getting into a fight, I get to defend him and I come to senses at the police station cause I got my head kicked in, while Kolya sleeps at home ok. I lost a guitar this way. [...]

HERO DISHONEST

Ex-USSR tour report / September 2003

In 2000 we did three gigs in Russia, played in an ice hockey hall on a stage between two motorcycles, rode to Moscow on a luggage rack, ate the best "kapusta" (sauerkraut) in the world and got drunk with 22 year old lawyer. Ever since we had talked about going back. Now we had tape release over there and we were also invited to play in Belarus. To go to Russia you need visas. It's expensive and takes a week. Some touring bands, especially from US, don't seem to understand this, and thus never make it to Russia. You can get it on the border, but it costs even more. The same goes with Belarus. There's no passport check between Russia and Belarus, so it's basically possible to sneak in and back without the visa. The locals do it all the time I guess, but we needed them 'cos after Belarus we were going to Lithuania. And the closest Belarusian embassy is in Tallinn, Estonia. Szarapow, our Russian manager in St. Petersburg insisted us to send our passports to him, so that

he can pick the Belarus visas for us from the embassy in St. Petersburg. We had our doubts, big ones, but we had no other option (any of that we were aware of anyway). But like with most of the stuff in Russia it wasn't so simple. Szarapow couldn't get the visas without our signatures, but he was assured that we could get them in one day once we get there. It would just cost more. We were supposed to leave in three days and our passports were still in St. Petersburg. The day before they had still not arrived. An hour before our buss to St. Petersburg Jussi picked up them from Tommi's post box. Tommi had to work and was supposed to take a train the next morning. Going to Russia involves a lot of maybe's and supposed to's... Others starring were Mikko, Tuukka and Vellu (that's me).

None of us speak Russian, but Sergei, our Russian dealer in Finland, told the driver where to drop us. Everything was under control, after the first traffic lights when entering St. Petersburg. The bus was full of Russian tourists eating fish sandwiches. The driver started the engine, while we were still waiting for Jussi and the passports. Finally he came, running and cursing, and off we went. The ride took about five hours and was pretty boring.

The city greeted us with huge apartment buildings spreading across the seaside as far as you could see. Before we knew what was going on the driver and some passengers were engaged in an argument, apparently about where to drop us. A moment after we waved the bus goodbye and started waiting. After an hour wait we got few mysterious phone calls from somebody who had seen us,



telling us to stay put and wait for Szarapow. The cold kept creeping into our bones, but like true cosmopolitans we kept ourselves warm with politically correct jokes about locals and their ways. The noises of traffic were loud and sharp and I started to taste the lead in my mouth. It turned out that the bus driver couldn't tell the first traffic lights from the second nor the third ones, so he just led us out somewhere, but after getting into Szarapow's warm apartment where stereos blasted Belarussian reggae we couldn't be bothered. We were fed and after a little chat it was time to go to bed. To the floor I mean.

Next morning when we headed to the Belarussian embassy to get the visas, we got an SMS from Tommi saying that the train to St. Petersburg had been cancelled. He was supposed to get the visa straight after arriving to St. Petersburg, but now it wasn't sure if he would even make it to that evening's gig. So we decided to do that in Moscow with Tommi,

Mikko





Tuukka

although it wasn't sure if it was even possible... We took all of our stuff to a flat near the club Moloko and spent the day walking around the city, eating and drinking, and buying cheap records. To get the train tickets to Moscow you need a passport, "because this is fucked up place" according to one local. And since we didn't have Tommi's, we were unaware if he could fit into the same train, but we bought ours anyway. Inside Moloko the atmosphere was relaxed. The venue can hold up to 200-300 persons and seemed to have good vibe in it. It wasn't just an ordinary commercial club. The



Jussi

place kept filling up. We enjoyed beverages and people seemed to have a good time. Tommi phoned, he was in Vyborg, the bus he took from Helsinki had broken down and there was a big racket going on. He could just guess what it was all about. Among the Finns the atmosphere wasn't relaxed anymore, but for the locals it sounded like an everyday scenario. We did some kind of a soundcheck, watched the first band play, got an SMS that he got a new bus, watched the second band play and set our equipment ready... Tommi came running and cursing, but right on time and we started to play immediately. It was a blast, the place was packed and kids went nuts, punk rock a la Russia. Hardly any foreign bands play there and these people show their appreciation. After the show I was introduced to a bunch of people whose names and bands they played in I hardly heard from all that adrenaline and serotonin rushing in me.

Last time we had to bribe the conductor to let us into an already full car on the train to Moscow, but this time it went smooth. Every car has its own conductor. Locals called her the master of the car or something. They give you a blanket and a mattress for free, but to use them you need sheets, your own or ones you get from the master with a little fee. He / she also makes tea and coffee, and on our first tour the guy seemed to have unlimited resources of alcohol too... and it was the cheapest class.

We arrived to Moscow in the morning, met Iliia and Ola, left our stuff at Iliia's place and headed to the Belarussian embassy. It turned out we needed copies of our passports. We could see the copy machine through the window, right under their noses, but there was no way they'd help us. Ola copied them somewhere, dollars (yes, use dollars if you want something to happen in Russia!) were exchanged and everyone was

happy. After a delicious lunch at Iliia's place I let my already aching body rest on a couch in a friendly atmosphere and enjoyed the silence inside the flat.

Moscow is a big fucking place. All we saw was heavy traffic, dirt, grey, apartment buildings, grey and more grey. The fall had started and it was chilly and raining, but down in metro tunnels the air was hot, dry and thick of stench of used engine, oil and burning rubber. I could feel the noises scattering through my ear drums every time a metro hit the brakes. I would need a gas mask and double ear plugs to live in a place like that. The gig was held in R-Club, a pretty big venue with a lot of ugly paintings and artwork that looked more funny than scary. Since we had to catch the 11.00 p.m. train we would play second. We did an interview for Radio Arsenal which I hope made some sense. The first band was from Belarus playing screamoish stuff with few poppy parts. There was about 400 kids, and the place was full of cigarette smoke. Without hearing people speak Russian it would have been impossible to tell where you are, so much has the West influenced these kids. So much we looked the same. We played next and the crowd went apeshit. And berserk. Mikko was in trouble keeping the kids off from jumping on his distortion pedal, Tuukka was in trouble with the cute ladies in the crowd that I dived on and the rhythm section was just in trouble with keeping it all together... We checked out some of the next band and then we had to leave.

It rained heavily and we were in a hurry. We stopped on the sidewalk, waved our hands few times, a car stopped, we told where we wanted to, bargained the price, stepped into the stranger's car and hoped he knew where to take us. With a little money every car turns into a taxi... After a late supper in the train I laid on a russki train futon, wait-

ing to fall asleep, listening to the rolling sounds of the train. I felt a burning spot in the right side of my chest. Somebody had bit me in the ribs.

Before arriving to Minsk we had a chat with a fellow passenger with international sign language. According to him Minsk was a lot more relaxed and safe than Moscow. Actually he made Minsk sound like a safe haven compared to Moscow. Everyone in Moscow on the other hand wished good luck for us...

The guys we met at the Minsk train station: Jabba, Fox, Dragga, Zhenia and a bunch of others, were a bit nervous. Everyone kept looking over their shoulders all the time. All except Jabba. He took our passports and most of our money and bought us train tickets to Lithuania. Later I thought about the whole scenario where you are in a country the language you don't speak nor read the alphabet, in a country which is known in Amnesty's annual reports from election scams to numerous violations against the principle human rights, or for what concerned us the most: where nazis work with the cops, you just hand you passport and money to the first person who asks for them. This made me fall even deeper in love with our little international community of punks, activists and fuck-ups. We didn't see much of the city as the locals were in a hurry to get us safe. There was to be a big soccer game the next day and since nazis like soccer, beer and fighting with punks, there might be trouble ahead. A huge meal was cooked and the Finns were satisfied. In the last minute the venue we were supposed to play had called the whole thing off and the kids were forced to rent another venue, fancier and more expensive, with their own money. With no guarantee of getting it back. We started to realize how much effort these fellows had put for this single gig to happen. They wanted to show people that it's

possible, and they wanted us to play.

Tommi's pants looked more like a torn up skirt. He wanted to get a pair of new ones from a thrift store while the others just wanted to see a bit of the city. After a little argument by the locals, kind of like we aroused in the bus, we left for a pants hunt armed with a small fire extinguisher and clubs. Zhenia, who was actually not from Minsk was more nervous while Dragga and Fox were calm, but looking over their shoulders nevertheless. We didn't find any

pants, but we ended up in an apartment of a punk couple. They gave Tommi a pair of pants and tea and biscuits for everyone. We enjoyed them with Czech animations and the Finns were satisfied again.

The nazis in Belarus, like in parts of Poland, are very organized. There's a lot of spying, even infiltration, and violence of course. Punks hardly have a gig without trouble. When we saw one bonehead as we walked to the club they first called the club if it was safe to come, and apparently



they called someone to go after the guy.

The club was called Safari. The stage was big and full of fancy equipment. Everyone kept telling us to relax. Nice and easy. Some started to put up distros or just drink beer. After the soundcheck somebody told us nazis had called a bomb threat to the club. Everyone had to go outside. The cops looked like assholes. Never have I seen an asshole so full of authority in my life. We didn't know what to expect, but when they let us in to pick up our gear we started to realize. I asked from Dragg if he thought we couldn't play. "I don't think so, I know so" he replied and nobody argued. It looked like it was nothing new, that this was actually pretty normal. I felt like a tourist. Everyone in the band agreed to come back someday whatever it takes.

Back in the apartment we heard more violent stories of Belarussian reality as it is for punks. We started drinking beer and eventually ended up having vodka in an open hut on the lawn of the apartment. I got very drunk. Suddenly somebody shouted "Cops" and everybody started to run back to the flat. It took a few more seconds for me to realize that I should be running up the stairs too, but they got me convinced pretty fast. We turned off the lights and waited for a moment, but when I found out that somebody had actually thrown the vodka bottle somewhere, "Something no man would do in Finland!!!", me and Zhenia "the trouble maker" decided to go buy another one. I was very very drunk. I remember getting chatting with somebody outside the store that turning into pushing and showing, me running away... blackout.

When I woke up I instantly knew my band mates were already heading to Lithuania. I had a big bleeding wound in my palm, it hurt to bend my right knee and vomit had made spikes out of half of my hair. I went to puke some more, heard that I'm taking a bus to Vilnius

in afternoon and that we had had "a good party". I went back to sleep. Much later I found out that we'd been chased with cops carrying machine guns, kept everybody awake giggling about it and passed out into a bathtub. I've had started puking all over the place and resisted firmly when my buddies tried to dress me up for the train. "Voi rytyn rytty! What have I ever done to you Tuukka?"

It was hard to convince my cute and helpful friends from Belarus that I'm ok. That it's just a hang-over. When the bus driver didn't let me into the bus 'cos I kept puking into a plastic bag in front of him, my straight edge nurses brought me coal pills and a small bottle of something, that later turned out to be stronger than anything I had drank the night before, to ease my hang-over. They looked worried, not angry, and went to find out the next vehicle to Vilnius.

The train ride was horrible and it was running late, but the people at Green Club were nice enough to wait. It was a secret gig due to the problems the squat the club was in had with the authorities. There were just us playing and a lot of familiar faces in the crowd. We played as sharp as we have ever played, people enjoyed and I tried to keep the apple I had eaten not coming back up. After the gig

we passed a hat around for voluntary payment and got one Polish girl angry. "Guys from a rich country come here to ask money even though there's people in the world that have no money to eat." Everyone else who stayed had good time.

We couldn't all fit into the bus we were supposed to take next morning, so me and Jussi stayed in Vilnius for another day and took a bus to Estonia late in the evening. The day was lazy. We hung around in Vilnius with locals doing absolutely nothing. The city is beautiful and I've had some best of times there. My cap was still in vomit, the knee started to hurt more and more making it hard to walk, there was still sand in the wound and I must have smelled like a rotten ass, but I was just happy to be able to eat and lucky to have escaped the pigs in Minsk. We arrived in Tallinn, Estonia, in the morning and took a ferry to Helsinki. Once back home I felt like taking a shower.

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Tommi

HERO DISHONEST

Finland and ex-USSR tour report / July 2004

We did a tour of Russia and Belarus, plus two shows in Finland in mid-July 2004. Traveling were Vellu and Tuukka – shouters, Mikko – guitar, Lasse – bass, Jussi – drums and Andrea – Vellu's girlfriend. Written by Lasse.

Day 1 – Tomina-club / Ilosaarirock

I woke up pretty early after almost no sleep at all, went to Mikko's place to meet everyone, then to the rehearsal space to get our stuff and then towards Joensuu. We were going to play on the opening club for Ilosaarirock, the second biggest festival in Finland. Our first show in two months, actually. The van didn't break down which was the biggest surprise of the 8-hour trip to Joensuu. We arrived at the gigantic tent that we were playing in right before showtime. So we got our stuff onstage, did a linecheck of some sort and started to play on the enormous stage that was about 10 metres above the crowd that was behind a fence 10 metres away from the stage. The show was filmed for some movie about the festival.

How did the show go? Depends who you ask. Personally I think it sucked shit, at least I did. Actually a lot of people said it looked pretty weird on such a big stage and that the sound was so terrible that they couldn't hear a thing. They weren't alone, the stage sound was all a blur too. I missed the contact with the audience up there, it felt like playing in an aquarium... After the show I felt like hanging myself but opted to get drunk instead. It was a fun evening and I ran into lots of friends, I also saw TikTak which is some of the most brutal metalcore Finland has ever produced, worth checking out!

Eventually it dawned on me that we had a show the next day as well so I left for the place we were supposed to sleep in with Tommi, we got lost only once. It was pretty late but I fell asleep fast.

Day 2 – Vyborg, Russia

Woke up after a few hours of sleep wanting to kill the bastards who decided that it's a good idea to start yelling and laughing at 8 am. Had some breakfast and walked back to the festival area. Before leaving we had to drive around town to find people to buy our artist passes which were good for the whole festival. Then we headed towards the Russian border.

It was ages since I had last visited Russia so I didn't really know what to expect. I was certain we would get into some trouble because we had a shitload of instruments with us and didn't look very much like a group of innocent tourists anyway... Problem one was getting a ride across the border, walking was not allowed and our driver didn't

have a visa so we had to hitchhike from the Finnish side to the Russian side. That was easier than I thought, we just asked random people about getting a ride and everyone agreed immediately! The Russian border on the other hand took ages to get across. We went in separate groups, me and Jussi were the last to cross. In the steaming hot car, surrounded by military and borderguards and a ton of wasps my slight hangover was turning into a paranoid nightmare and I was certain the other guys hadn't got across and neither would we. When we finally got there it was very quick and easy and we found Vellu and Andi sitting at the bus station, the others had already left for Vyborg. Vellu told us that the border guards almost couldn't stamp his passport cause they were so amused by his appearance.

We skipped the bus and did the Russian thing which, as I was to discover a few times on this trip, meant just hailing a random car,



negotiating a price and then getting a ride pretty much anywhere. This guy drove us to Vyborg in less than one hour.

The venue already had some punk kids drinking outside so it was easy to spot. We actually arrived there before the others who had left earlier. We checked out the place and equipment and waited for the others. They finally arrived with a bunch of kids and this guy who was shrieking like a crow. The others didn't seem to find it very weird and it turned out that this was Szarapow, our Russian manager who had been just drinking a bit... Funny guy, for the first two hours I couldn't stop laughing watching the guy just bounce all over the place, scream and eventually go swimming in the river in his underwear. Took a walk around the town, got food at a gas station, went back to the venue.

We did the soundcheck, the guitar and bass equipment were ok, the drums were pretty crappy. The stage was insanely high but small so us players stood up there while the singers were running

around on the floor. It was a decent size crowd and I think they were into it. We played first because we had to catch the last train to St. Petersburg, we didn't get to see the two local bands playing that night.

After the show we got our instruments and stuff packed up, waited for food and some beer. We kept asking if we should go already and the answer was always "Nah, there's still like 15 minutes... still 5 minutes... Oh just relax, there's still a good 34 seconds..." and all of a sudden we reeeeeaaally had to run for the last train. We crammed our stuff into a car that was going to the station and just ran across the city ourselves. We got on the train at pretty much the last minute!

The train ride went nicely drinking beers, chatting and witnessing pretty weird stuff. A drunken guy who didn't speak a word of English kept bothering us, eventually he followed us to a tram in St. Petersburg and we had to throw him out because he was getting a bit violent.

Slept at Szarapow's place for like

two hours...

Day 3 – Pskov, Russia

I vaguely remember carrying a shitload of stuff to a minibus full of people and getting to the bus station. We said goodbye to Szarapow and left for Pskov. The busride was pretty uneventful, hot and took about 6-7 hours. We arrived in Pskov and the first guy we met was some Russian guy with a Jamaican hat saying something about rastafari, it was pretty weird. Eventually our hosts showed up and took us to the club TIR, which was one of the coolest I had ever seen. It was decorated with stuff that looked like it had been stolen from a construction site, metal fences and stuff. The stage was ridiculously high again but this time it was big enough for the entire band! On the way we saw some flyers that said we were hardcorepunk with Slayer influences, heh! We went to exchange some money and came back to the club to find our vegetarian meal which was actually a boiled sausage each. Well, there was bread, vegetables and



some tea and coffee so we managed. Then we did a pretty long soundcheck jamming on all kinds of stuff. The others left to see the city, I stayed at the club trying to sleep a bit, it was impossible but the rest was still very welcome. The guys who put up the show had been a bit pessimistic about people showing up, it being sunday and all but when I got out of the backstage there was a pretty good sized crowd in there. When the others came back it was almost time for Ankylym from St. Petersburg to play. And man were they awesome! They played really weird Russian versions of stuff like the DK's Nazi Punks Fuck Off, some Nirvana song and even Impaled Nazarene's Suomi Finland Perkele! The singer even used a painters ladder as an instrument at one point. Really weird, really funny.

We got on and the place just erupted. Obviously most of the people in attendance had never even heard of us but they were really into it. We played one of the longest sets we've ever done, I think we got called back three times. At one point Vellu fell off the stage which was really high but luckily was not hurt seriously and actually just missed one line before getting back up and charging into the crowd. Up until then it was definitely my best show with the band and the others seemed to rank it pretty high as well. After the show there was no sign left of my tiredness. The rest of the night was all about disco, beers and talking with the locals. All kinds of weird stuff happened, some of us slept for a couple of hours, some didn't get any sleep at all. Shows like these make trips like the next days worth it...

Day 4 – Minsk, Belarus

Someone woke me up after a couple of hours of sleep for the early morning bus. My body was all numb and I couldn't think clearly but I remember sitting in a taxi go-



ing really fast and lying on the asphalt at the bus station waiting for the bus. I think I caught about an hour of sleep while traveling which was definitely needed. Jussi had stayed up all night and slept for about 6 hours, lucky him! Vellu had the worst hangover since his last time in Minsk, I felt sorry for the guy until I had a severe allergic reaction to something and kept sneezing for about 9 hours with one pitiful piece of paper to blow my nose on. Then when we were almost in Minsk I found out we had a whole roll with us.

There is no border check between Russia and Belarus but foreigners should actually have a visa to visit the country. But according to our original visas that got us into Russia we were supposed to be sightseeing in St. Petersburg or something so we didn't get any visas. Besides they are really expensive, not to mention for sissies! So that added an extra element of excitement to our trip to Belarus.

The ride took about 12 hours I think but finally we got to the Minsk station. The bus guy didn't want to give us our equipment without something called swzszkvzswd but we didn't know what that was and eventually just took everything with him protesting. Some of us left to get some water, me and Mikko stayed guarding the equip-

ment while Vellu was sitting in the shadow trying to cure his hangover. To no avail.

Eventually the guys putting up the show showed up and crammed us into a minibus with an Austrian band called the Plague Mass who were also playing and Aga, their tour manager who was also friends with the rest of the guys from their previous tours.

The show was outside of Minsk at an abandoned pioneer center, the pioneers were like a Soviet version of the boy scouts I guess. The show was only promoted within the scene through word of mouth, that was really out of necessity because the nazi problem in Belarus is huge. The nazi skins enjoy protection from the KGB and ruin lots of shows in central Minsk. This show was special for us because last year, before I was in the band the guys had had to cancel a show there just hours before getting on stage because of a nazi bomb threat. The dedication the Belarus punks have for keeping their scene going despite living in danger from both the nazis and cops is amazing and something I really admired. After all, the country is a dictatorship that's best known probably for it's human rights abuses... When carrying our stuff into the big room where we played both me and Mikko started coughing a lot. We asked about it and were told it was just

traces of tear gas. Oh.

At this point we were tired as fuck and were taken into a cabin with broken windows and a few beds. I checked out the other bands for a while, ate some and went to sleep. I was actually totally asleep when it was our turn to play, most of us were. The show was running really late because the first soundcheck took ages. I had a feeling the show was going to be intense because I had trouble already while figuring out the ancient bass amp I was using because people kept falling on me dancing to the hardcore techno music the DJ was blasting out at an insane volume.

We checked the sound pretty quickly and went into it. The show was floorlevel and unbelievably chaotic, hot and intense. Maybe even better than the previous one, hard to tell. The singers were crowdsurfing most of the time and the rest of us just played our asses off, it was like playing right in the pit. Afterwards I wasn't feeling sleepy at all but after talking with people for a while I decided it would be best to just try and get some sleep for once... No such luck. People kept running in and out of the room we were trying to sleep in. Well, Tuukka and Jussi were sleeping but I was sleeping next to a broken window in a swarm of mosquitoes. I eventually did sleep for a few hours in the morning.

Day 5 – Grodna, Belarus

I woke up to Jussi yelling and cursing. His phone and some other stuff was missing. Vellu had also lost his wallet and passport but we found those eventually. Jussi's stuff on the other hand had actually been stolen. The local organizers were obviously very sorry about this and Jussi calmed down as well after hearing two words: I'm not saying what they are but they start with an I and an F and rhyme with assurance and broad...



We had to walk to the train station and we had lots of locals help us carry our stuff, a common occurrence here it seemed. The train was really crowded but it was just about a half an hour's trip back to Minsk where we had to wait, wait and wait for our minibusride to the next town. I was getting a bit worried sitting there because there was a huge crowd of us sitting in the centre of Minsk and getting a lot of attention. People in the passing busses actually pointed at us and laughed, which was actually pretty amusing! But with a lot of cops around (we were sitting in front of a bank) the fact that we were in the country illegally sprung into my mind more than once...

Well after like four-five hours of

waiting our ride eventually showed up and soon we were packed tight in the van with the Austrians again. The ride took about four hours and in that time I believe Jussi came up with a solution to every problem in the world with the Austrians. So it was a pretty pleasant trip actually.

We came to the venue and did a soundcheck immediately, we also played first so after the check it was straight to the show. It was ok, the thing that bothered me a bit was that the mixing board was up front and the crowd was behind it. Also the lights guy seemed to be into strobe lights, I am NOT... The stage was pretty big and it was by no means a bad show, it just couldn't compare to the two

previous ones! After the show I heard that it really had looked like we'd been just going through the motions and I felt bad about that for a while, then it was time to run again. This time to the organizer's home to eat and shower so we could get back to Minsk in time for the nighttrain to Moscow. While we were eating we heard that last night in Minsk while we were playing the nazis had somehow found out that there was supposed to be a punk show, they had been looking for it and actually attacked a wrong show (some alternative stuff, I heard) beating and stabbing people. Five people had ended up in a hospital, holy shit...

We ate quickly and went back to the venue to get the rest of our stuff, said hi to everyone and headed back to Minsk. With us was Ivan, our driver and 6 Belarussian kids. The ride back was pretty relaxed until we got stopped by the police. Ivan said "Mein gott!" ("Oh my god!") and we knew there could be trouble. Ivan was smart enough to drive way past the cop and then run back to the cop with his papers apologizing for noticing him too late or something so we got away. But if the cop had seen us in the car... We got to Minsk about 20 minutes before the train was going to leave, got the tickets, got food and said bye to the kids who had been traveling with us before stepping on the train. The train had beds so I got my first decent sleep in a week.

Day 6 – Day off in Moscow

I woke up at about the same time with Mikko and we went for coffee in the restaurant car while the others were still sleeping. We were talking about what we had just done, going into the last dictatorship in Europe illegally and playing a bunch of shows. We didn't really think about it that much while there but now we had time to think about the could have happeneds. We also agreed that the tour was

ending too quickly and next year we should do a longer one and try to go to more of the former Soviet states. The rest of the train ride was spent researching the different aspects of Belarussian potato chips and drinking more coffee.

In Moscow we met with our hosts and were taken to Kirill's apartment where we were staying. The others went to the market at the metro station, me, Jussi and Tuukka stayed to guard our stuff. We noticed again another unique thing about Russia: even in a huge city like Moscow total strangers just come and start conversations with you. We hadn't been sitting at the station for more than a few minutes when a bunch of guys and a girl came over and started asking about what we were doing and where we are playing, seeming genuinely interested in a bunch of smelly foreign losers with a bunch of instruments and bags full of dirty clothes. This happened many more times on our short trip!

After that we went to the apartment which was a very nice place, made some food and got some well deserved rest. I felt stupid: here I am in Moscow, a city I've always wanted to visit and all I could do was lie on a couch, drink beer and watch Slayer & Motorhead DVDs! Am I an idiot? Yes. Yes I am. But I think everyone had a nice evening and the rest was welcome. We stayed up pretty late before hitting bed again.

Day 7 – Moscow, Russia

We left in the morning to do tourist stuff like seeing the Red Square and finding out that the mausoleum where they keep Lenin's corpse on display was closed. We ate and visited a huge marketplace where they sold cheap pirate DVDs before heading back to the apartment and then to the club.

The club was the biggest one so far and the parking lot was al-

ready filled with kids when we got there. Three bands played before us, the place was already steaming hot when we got on. There were about 400 kids at the club going completely berserk, stagediving and doing circlepits. It was so hot on stage that I was about as wet as I would be after jumping into a lake, only this was from sweat! Jussi looked at times like he was dying behind his kit, really he was just pissing his pants though. Playing the show was such a rush that I don't remember many specific things, just chaos. Afterwards I was just speechless, I sat there alone sipping a beer just completely happy while the others were doing something backstage.

Again, a lot of kids volunteered to carry our stuff and there were a lot of people from the show hanging out at the metro station. We stayed there for a while chatting with people before leaving again to catch the nighttrain to St. Petersburg. The only downside to touring Russia that I can think of was that the distances were so long that we almost always had to leave after the shows and couldn't hang out with the locals more. But this time a bunch of kids who wanted to see the next day's show traveled with us, we also met some others at the station sitting outside of the train. We were pretty loud and in good moods by this point, for some reason the car we were in got empty pretty quick, except for us. I stayed up for a while with Jussi and Tuukka sharing meaningful anecdotes on human sexuality.

Day 8 – St. Petersburg, Russia

We met with Szarapow again at the train station, he had the russian c-cassette edition of our new record with him. We took a look at them and then headed for the apartment where we were going to leave all our stuff. It was a five minute-walk away which meant about half an hour. After

that we went to some pancake place and then split up to explore the city, I went with Tuukka. Again we met lots of very talkative total strangers and had a nice day.

We got back to the meeting place, got our stuff and got a ride to the club, Moloko. It was smaller than last night, I'd estimate it held about 300 people. We had to play first again because we had to catch a bus to Finland. The place was packed pretty tight and it was a fun show. The band we played with in Pskov, Ankylym played after us and Vellu and Jussi played drums and bass for them on one or two songs. After that we talked with the locals outside and left for the bus. The bus was full of people and the crossing the border took ages, both sides had a bad day and were really anal about everything. On the Russian side I think they checked our passports a total five times! On the Finnish side the whole bus had to be emptied and they checked every little corner of it with flashlights. Everyone was pretty pissed off but we got to Finland ok and I woke

up in Helsinki at 7 am when the bus was there. Got home and went to sleep.

Day 9 – Lempaala, Finland: Puntalarock

We had to leave at noon because I had a show with my other band at 4 pm on the festival we were also playing at. Puntalarock is the biggest punk festival in Finland and has been going on for years. It's always two days and has a shitload of finnish bands as well as 6-8 foreign bands, this year's biggest name was the Subhumans.

We got there about 15 minutes before I played with my other band and then started to wait for our show a few hours from then, checking out bands and catching up with loads of friends. It was also going to be our singer Tuukka's last show with the band. Before the show I once again put on the shirt I had worn for every show on the tour. It smelled so bad that I almost puked. We started playing to an empty field while some other band was still going

on the second stage, people started rolling in. Although we would have preferred to play on the small stage it was really cool and after the set Tuukka's pants got torn off by Vellu. There was some wrestling and beer fighting between us and Valse Triste. The rest of the night was spent walking aimlessly around the festival and running into friends. I saw Rytmihairio and Subhumans, really liked both. The last thing I remember was my friend Riku trying to explain the deepest essence of heavy metal but he couldn't form one understandable word and he was puking too. Which, after all, was pretty much the deepest essence of heavy metal. Eventually I woke up in the morning in a car, not ours by the way, that was luckily moving towards Helsinki.

Photos (from Minsk, Grodna and Moscow) by Gurski, Danik and Chikomoto.

For contacts look a few pages back.



The never ending war in Chechnya

by Julia Hoffmann (ramava@gmx.net), February 2004

1. "A tremendous legacy of hatred"

Conflict in Chechnya:

Background Perspective

(The Chechen point of view)

Now after two wars in Chechnya in the post-Soviet era - one under the Yeltsin administration, one under Putin - there is still no end of one of the world's most brutal civil wars in sight. The Chechens cannot expel the Russians and the Russians cannot prevent Chechen raids and terrorist actions. The long legacy of the unequal and bitter struggle has defined the Russian-Chechen relations. Like other such conflicts, it has its roots in the history of the interactions between the protagonists, and how they define themselves and the "other". To understand the conflict, this note will review the political and religious history of the North Caucasus region.

Tsarist Intervention and Chechen Resistance

The first Russian-Chechen clash took place in 1722, when the inhabitants of a Chechen village (*aul*) drove off a Russian cavalry patrol. Sheikh Mansur led a war against the Russians from 1785 to 1791.

Under Catherine II Russia began to push Russian settlements into the mountains of the North Caucasus. To the Chechens, this was a threat and they fought.

After the Napoleonic wars, Russia advanced to the South Caucasus. A religious movement combined with a charismatic leader, Imam Shamil (1796-1871), sustained their resistance. Sufism a profound spiritual movement and Koran-based social order became the traditional religious movement of the Chechens and other Islamic peoples of the North Caucasus. Sufism stands up for the establishment of the Shari'ah or Islamic law and opposes the blood feud (*the kanli*) practiced by Chechen clans over

* - Further reading recommendation: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1998).

centuries, where no offensive against clan honor could go unpunished, and feuds could go on for generations.



Imam Shamil

Shamil tried to create a coalition of all the Mountaineers, but the Russians were able to block him. His power, therefore, was confined to Chechnya and Dagestan. Even so, he was able to fight off everything the Russians sent during the Great Caucasus War (1834-1859), but the more numerous Russian forces, based on the two garrison towns of Vladikavkaz ("*conqueror of the Caucasus*") and Grozny ("*threatening*") prevailed. At length Shamil was forced to surrender and Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan were attached to the Russian Empire. But a tremendous legacy of hatred was left, especially among the Chechens who had fought the hardest and suffered the most.

Stalinism and Chechnya

When the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917, the Chechens tried again and the Republic of the North Caucasus was proclaimed. The Mountaineers fought against Red and White forces in the Civil War. The Reds supported the independence of the region as part of their struggle with the Whites and in the hope of using Islam against the imperial powers. The Whites found support among the Russian Cossack populations living on the steppe and resistance among the Chechen mountaineers.

When the White forces in the Cau-

casus were defeated in 1920, the Bolsheviks entered the North Caucasus. In Bolshevik propaganda Shamil became a revolutionary and symbol of resistance to imperial rule. Many Mountaineers welcomed the Bolsheviks, who seemed to sympathize with their aspirations and were, in any case, the enemies of their enemy. However, after the civil war the Bolsheviks sent the Red Army into the region, overthrew the existing order. The Mountaineers rose in response. In August 1920 a new war began in the south of Dagestan. Almost immediately all of Dagestan and southern Chechnya was in revolt. By 1921, large Bolshevik forces were fighting this resistance.

Soviet propaganda then cast Shamil as a class enemy. Soviet interests in Chechnya grew with the development of its oil fields and the arrival of Russians to manage the oil industry.

On January 20, 1921 Stalin, then Commissar for Nationalities, declared that the Bolsheviks supported sovereignty and independence for the Mountaineers. Chechnya was taken out of the Mountain Republics and made into an Autonomous Oblast of the Russian Federation (ASSR) - the beginning of a continuing process of re-definition and ever diminishing freedoms. By 1924, the Mountain Republic had been dissolved in a similar fashion into national units inside the newly-created Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. One by one the promises were broken. In 1929, the Soviet leadership decided to introduce collectivization in the USSR, starting with the North Caucasus. The Chechens immediately rose and serious fighting lasted from December 1929 to Stalin's relaxing of collectivization in March 1930. But, this was just a tactical retreat and the Soviet terror intensified in Chechnya, as elsewhere, through the 1930s. From this time on the Chechens never stopped fighting.

Undeniably the greatest disaster to befall the Chechen people was the deportation of 1944. Stalin decided that now was the time to settle with them and he decreed that the en-

tire people had been guilty of collaborating with the Nazis. In 1944 NKVD carried out Stalin's "solution to the Chechen Question" - mass deportation of Chechens to Central Asia. Over 70,000 of the 450,000 Chechens expelled died during transit or upon arrival. Chechnya ceased to exist. The discovery of a Stalin-era mass grave in Grozny in August 1990 was a reminder to the genocide. The exile became the defining event for succeeding generations of Chechens.

In 1957 Nikita Khrushchev decreed that the Chechens could return to their ancestral homelands. Chechnya and Ingushetia were joined administratively into the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic.

The North Caucasus Mountaineer Republic

But, for many Chechens, Chechen independence was not the end of the struggle. The Chechen independence struggle has usually been carried out as part of a struggle for the independence for all the Mountaineers.

The dream of the Mountaineer Republic and the memory of its early death at the hands of Russian Whites, Bolsheviks and Georgians after 1917, continues to exist. There has been talk about "liberating" Karabakh in Azerbaijan. It is, as it were, "the other shoe" of Chechen independence.

Not all Chechens want this, however, or at least not immediately: President Maskhadov, for example, has never said much about larger aims.

Chechnya's first president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, believed an independent Chechnya would lead to a Mountaineer Republic:

"As we [Chechens] hold a central geographic, strategic and economic position in the Caucasus and have the necessary human potential, we must be the initiators of this future union".

In April 1991, a founding meeting of the Assembly of the Mountain People of the Caucasus was held in Sukhumi, Abkhazia. Caucasian Mountain Peoples met in Grozny with delegates from Chechnya, Adygeya, Abkhazia, Ingushetia, Osssetia, Dagestan, Kabarda and Circassia and delegations from the Karachay, Akin Chechens (the

Chechens who live in Dagestan) and Tatars (who live in Russia and Ukraine).

But what sort of independent Chechnya or Mountaineer Republic is it to be? Secular or Islamist? If the latter what kind of Islamist? The fighting in Chechnya has brought the word "Wahhabism" to public notice.



Dzhokhar Dudayev

Chechens and Islam The Wahhabi Imamate*

Arabic language and Islamic faith gave Chechens access to a literate world that linked Chechen culture to a greater identity. Chechens embraced the religion brought by Muslim missionaries and made it their own. By the eighteenth century most of the peoples of the Caucasus, with the exception of the Georgians and Armenians, were Muslims. Islam provided the basis for alliances with the many other Islamic peoples of the region in their struggle with Orthodox Russia.

Wahhabism, a movement to purify Islam, takes its name from Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791). Al-Wahhab believed that over the years monotheism had become corrupted by polytheistic practices. He tried to cleanse it of a millenium's accretions and return it to what he saw as its ancient purity. An analogous Christian example might be the Puritans of the English Civil War and Protectorate.

Wahhabism directly confronts the traditional Sufism of the North Caucasus and it preaches that Sufism

** - Much of this is drawn from Dale Herspring Putin's Russia. 2003 Chapter of Jacob W. Kipp and Patrick Armstrong Conflict in Chechnya Journal of Conflict Studies November 1999 which can be found in the Internet.*

is incorrect and bad Islam.

The Wahhabis in Chechnya are fighting for a Wahhabi state there. They appear to have made their first attempt to construct the Wahhabi Imamate when they tried to take over Chechen city of Gudermes in July 1998. In the Summer of 1999, they invaded Dagestan. Their aim is to create a Wahhabi state right

across the North Caucasus and, probably, after that in Abkhazia in Georgia.

The leading Wahhabi field commander in Chechnya is Al Khattab. He has formed an alliance with perhaps Chechnya's leading hero of the 1994 war, Shamil Basayev.

Basayev has been fighting to re-establish the Mountaineer Republic for several years. He led the Chechen forces in Abkhazia in the wars that obtained Abkhazia's *de facto* independence from Georgia. He was a leading field commander in the war against Russia and led the raid on the town of Budyonovsk that reversed the course of the war in June 1995. Hatred of Wahhabis is quite strong - they are accused of making war on other Muslims to further their heretical aims. Indeed, in many Muslim states, the expression "Muslim extremist," so beloved of Westerners refers to Wahhabis.

For this reasons it has to be recognized, that Chechens themselves have their motives to fight they are not only puppets in this war. In Chechnya, outsiders should be advised against picking sides and painting one as virtuous and the other evil. The level of chaos and disorder simply overwhelms these categories.

2. "Chechen independence is not acceptable"

Putin and Russia's Wars in Chechnya

(Review of the Putin Path)

It is nothing new that President Vladimir Putin has linked the end

game of the conflict in Chechnya with Russian participation in a broad, antiterrorist coalition. In the wake of the events of September 11th, Putin has chosen to redefine the former conflict to fit within the latter. This was not a particularly onerous task because Putin had long been describing the war in Chechnya as a campaign against bandits and terrorists. After September 11th, Putin announced his support for the international war against terrorism.

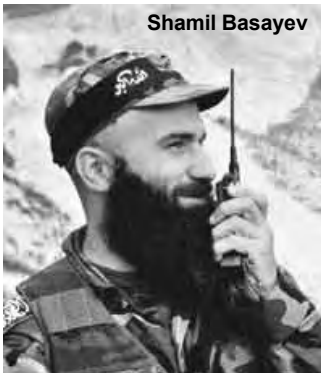
Labeling the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York barbaric, Putin offered Russian support for the antiterrorist struggle. He noted that Russia had long called for a unified effort against international terrorism, had been battling it in Chechnya and Central Asia, and was now ready to take an active part in a multilateral coalition against it. "Russia has not changed its stance. Surely, we are willing now, too to contribute to the antiterror cause. As we see it, attention must turn primarily to enhancing the role of international institutions established to promote international security - the United Nations and its Security Council"* . Putin defined Russia's national recovery in terms of a strong, stable, centralized state, Chechen independence could not be accepted, only imposed, and certainly not by the Chechen resistance alone, which is a challenge to Russia's imperial pretensions.

The First Chechen War of the Russian Federation, 1994-1996

When Mikhail Gorbachev embarked on his ill-fated attempt to save the Soviet system via Glasnost and Perestroika, Chechen nationalists saw an opportunity to attain national self-determination. Yeltsin encouraged the national republics within Russia further to seek greater autonomy. The Chechens exploited this opportunity. In late November 1990, a national Chechen conference declared the independence and sovereignty of Chechnya and its secession from the Soviet Union. General Major

* - Drawn from "Putin Determines Russian Stance on Antiterror Cause," RIA NOVOSTI, September 24, 2001.

Dzhokhar Dudayev quickly emerged as the leader of the self-proclaimed Chechen government. Initially, the Yeltsin government paid little attention to the situation in Chechnya. Dissolving the Soviet system, trying to create a viable Russian government, and transforming the economy through privatization and marketization were



Shamil Basayev

given top priority. While the Dudayev government managed to gain control of most of the Soviet weapons left in Grozny, it did not manage to create an orderly or stable government. Due to Dudayev's increasingly arbitrary and corrupt government, Chechnya sank into a morass of crime and terrorism that affected Russian economic and political interests.

Now Yeltsin came to view Chechen independence as a threat to Russia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. He came to view a Chechen victory as a geopolitical "domino" that would subject the Russian Federation to the same forces of disintegration that had torn apart the Soviet Union. He decided to lead a military intervention, which was declared a peacemaking mission that would restore 'constitutional order'. Officially he considered a military intervention as something less than a war.

The Yeltsin government did not anticipate serious or effective military resistance from the Chechens, either Dudayev's troops or a popular insurrection, however military professionals did warn the government regarding the condition of Russian forces and the danger of underestimating Chechen resistance. Russian military leadership gravely underestimated the risks of a popular uprising in support of Chechen independence. Confronted with a

failed covert operation, Yeltsin's government sought to use force to recover from the disaster. The political leadership, while eager for a military solution, was unable to provide a plausible explanation for the use of force in Chechnya.

Therefore the First Chechen war never invoked broad public support, and the Russian media, with few exceptions, critically questioned the government's account of the campaign.

When Shamil Basayev's band raided the village of Budyonovsk in Stavropol Kray ninety miles inside Russia and took hostages at the local hospital in June 1995, it was the Russian media that depicted the government's incompetent response, turning Basayev into an international figure, and further discrediting the Russian government's cause. As a final straw, the government failed to free hostages held by Basayev, and was forced to negotiate their release while permitting the escape of the Chechen detachment.

As the 1996 presidential elections approached, the Yeltsin government swung back and forth between repression and accommodation. To win re-election Yeltsin needed both evidence of progress on the ground and an opportunity to begin negotiations with the Chechens. On April 21, 1996 Dzhokhar Dudayev, the Chechen president, was killed. With the death of Dudayev, the Yeltsin government proposed a cease-fire as a first step toward a negotiated settlement. In the following months, the Yeltsin team ensured Yeltsin's re-election by forging an alliance with General Aleksandr Lebed, who had been an outspoken critic of the war in Chechnya. Confronted by the Chechen reconquest of Grozny and serious divisions within the government over the further prosecution of the war, for Lebed a cease-fire and settlement of Chechnya were the only way to save the unreformed armed forces from disintegration and collapse. The cease-fire ended the fighting but left the ultimate status of Chechnya unresolved.

Between the Wars, 1996 - 1999

On the Chechen side it was Aslan Maskhadov who was the driving

force behind the efforts to negotiate the peace agreement to end the first war. Aslan Maskhadov has been president of Chechnya since 1997, although he is now head of the rebel administration. He is seen as a moderate, and although a committed Muslim, he is opposed to the militant fundamentalist Islam, or Wahhabism.

With the peace, Maskhadov moved more formally into politics, as prime minister in the Chechen coalition government from October 1996, and subsequently president in January 1997.

As a moderate, many saw Maskhadov as leaning too close to Moscow. Speculation is rife following the Moscow theatre siege that he has effectively lost any influence he had with the militant factions in the separatist camp. Maskhadov is currently thought to be with rebel units in the mountainous region of the country.

In fact the inter-war period in Chechnya was a time of chaos. The economy was in ruins, there was little or no infrastructure with which to attempt a recovery, organized crime was rife, and back-yard oil refineries that lined the pockets of the gangsters were springing up all

over the republic.

The Second Chechen War, 1999 - ?

In summer 1999 separatists from Chechnya invaded the Russian republic of Dagestan, for the purpose to create a radical Wahhabi Islamic state in Chechnya and adjacent regions. The separatists supposedly took advantage of the confusion in Russian politics, which came along with the presidential pre-election period. But by a strange coincidence, they attacked Dagestan when preparations were already underway in Moscow for a transfer of power. And why didn't Moscow stop the invasion? Why did the Russian power ministers calmly watch the open massing of armed separatists in border regions? Moreover, a brigade of Interior Ministry troops that had been protecting the border between Chechnya and Dagestan was quickly removed just before the invasion.

Some Russian journalists wrote openly that people close to the Kremlin, primarily Berezovsky, might have pushed the Chechen fighters to attack Dagestan to increase the Russian's people's sense of vulnerability and pave the way for a change of rule*. "Why did Chechnya happen before Yeltsin's re-election? Why is there now Dagestan before these elections?," asked the magazine Profil on August 30, referring to the parliamentary elections scheduled for December. "Who ordered a war in Dagestan and why?"

The blow up of residential buildings in late Autumn 1999 in Moscow and other Russian cities killing about 300 civilians were the final cause for new military actions against Chechnya. Even before opening an investigation, the Kremlin

announced that there was a "Chechen trace" in the crimes. The terrorists however were never found, which gave rise to the suspicion about the involvement of Russian secret services in the explosions.

The conspiracy theory is too simple an explanation for the watershed change in Russian public opinion. But we must admit that to this day there are no satisfactory answers to numerous questions stemming from that period. Nor does one sense any desire by the Kremlin to conduct a thorough investigation of the events that would lead to the capture of the perpetrators, thereby putting an end to all the rumors*.

The blasts in Russian cities were the final straw that rendered retaliatory action in Chechnya 'inevitable'. On September 30, 1999, federal troops entered Chechnya. Because the military actions were labeled "antiterrorist operations", no approval from the upper chamber of the parliament, the Federation Council, or declaration of a state of emergency in Chechnya was required.

The majority of Russians considered the first Chechen war criminal. Now it was considered criminal not to support the military crusade in Chechnya**. After the military attack on Chechnya began, Putin no longer needed to continue the difficult struggle for power. All he had to do was point to the enemy, who were Chechens, naturally. War lifted him to the peak of the political Olympus. Even Putin's occasional use of street slang (for instance his promise to "wipe out" the Chechen terrorists "in the outhouse"), which shocked the intelligentsia, impressed the rest of the country with the new leader's folksiness.

* - Lilia Shvetsova is a Russian politolog with a great writing style and a critical attitude towards Russian policy in Chechnya. Reading recommendation Shvetsova, Lilia: *Putin's Russia*, 2003.

** - To compare: in January 1995, 54 percent of those polled wanted Russian troops pulled out of Chechnya. By contrast, in November and December 1999, between 61 and 70 percent of those polled approved of the operation in Chechnya. In: Lilia Shvetsova. *Putin's Russia*, p. 39.



Aslan Maskhadov

* - Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, p.4.



Akhmad Kadyrov and Vladimir Putin

In Summer of 2000, Moscow was showing signs of confusion over Chechnya, despite the obvious fact that it was dead end, still had the support of the public, which wanted the Russian army to keep on fighting until the separatists were crushed. Besides, Chechnya was not ready to build an independent state. The Russian army had occupied almost the entire territory of Chechnya, and the problem of what was to be done now was becoming much more pressing. If Russian troops left Chechnya, the field commanders - the same warlords who enriched themselves trading in hostages, drug trafficking, and selling arms - would take charge again as they had done after the first war. And the leaders then would not be the moderates like Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov but more intransigent people like Basayev and Khattab. The bandits' raids into Russian territory, kidnappings, and Chechnya's disintegration into chaos would continue. But Russia could not win in Chechnya either. So at this point in history, Russia and the breakaway Chechen republic were caught in a situation without exit. People began to ask why, with the full power of the army deployed against them, the separatist warlords were still at large and moving freely around Chechnya - and also to ask where the rebels were getting their advanced arms. A significant percentage of population believed that Russia's leaders were involved in a conspiracy with the rebel leaders. In the meantime a new generation of Chechens grew up, one that had

known nothing but war, was trained to do nothing, and thought of nothing but revenge against the Russians. Those youngsters were more and more leaning toward radical Islam - Wahhabism and jihad, the "sacred war" with Russia was becoming their life goal. Putin clearly didn't know what to do with Chechnya.

Russia lost the right to vote in the Council of Europe because of its handling of the "antiterrorist operation" in Chechnya (this right was returned to Russia in 2001 after a delegation from the council visited Chechnya and concluded that Russian policy there was becoming more "civilized").

By the end of the year 2000 it was obvious that the Russian public considered the war in Chechnya a failure*.

Presidential Elections in the Chechen Republic, 2003

At the start of the current conflict, Russia declared Maskhadov's government - the Ishkeria - illegitimate and installed their own administration. In rejecting negotiations with

** - 49 percent called the president's actions there unsuccessful, as opposed to 24 percent at the beginning of the year. But there were no antiwar demonstrations or other actions in Russia. Society seemed to remain aloof from the war, waiting it out. People pretended that the events in Chechnya and the continual losses had nothing to do with them.*

Maskhadov, Moscow lost a chance to come to terms with the generation of Chechen leaders still willing to talk to Moscow. The new generation of separatists, who grew up during the war with Russia and who think only of the holy jihad against Russians, wants only blood revenge.

But in the hostage taking of October 23rd 2002, when a group of Chechen fighters seized a theater in downtown Moscow and took more than 800 hostages to demand an end to the war in the Northern Caucasus, it was President Putin who rejected any negotiations with the terrorists. For the Kremlin to start negotiations would be the acknowledgement that the war with the Chechens was not to be won, and this war was an important legitimization of Putin's ascendancy to power. No, Vladimir Putin was not ready for defeat - especially when he was facing the elections. Instead he ordered special services to storm the theater building. This ruthless rescue operation, in which an unknown gas was used, killed about 120 hostages. Many more - about 600 hostages - found themselves in hospitals suffering from the mysterious gas cocktail.

The Kremlin was not ready to think about the domestic roots of the terrorist problem. Instead, it equated the struggle with the Chechen separatists with the U.S. struggle against Osama bin Laden and interpreted the hostage crisis as the activity of an international terrorism network. Nobody wanted to acknowledge that the "Chechen problem" had not been solved.

Instead Putin presented his idea of a three steps "normalization plan" for the North Caucasus. In March 2003, Chechen voters approved a new constitution affirming for the purpose to receive limited autonomy rights and they voted for new laws on the presidential election and the parliament of the Republic to create a legal basis for the deposition of Maskhadov. Over the summer, the government granted amnesty to rebels who laid down their weapons.

The balloting for a new Chechen president in October 2003 represented the third stage in this plan. But the elections were highly unfair. Election officials said Akhmad Kadyrov won 81,1 percent of the vote on a reported turnout of 83,46

percent. In contrary to this, rights groups reported that the polling stations were nearly empty and opinion polls have shown Kadyrov to be widely unpopular. Kadyrov is considered leader of the pro-Russian civil administration in Chechnya. Previously he was seen as a supporter of president Maskhadov, although violently opposed to the forces of Wahhabism. By the majority of Chechens he is seen as a turncoat, heading a puppet administration. President Maskhadov has called him an "enemy of the Chechen people".

The manipulation of the election has undermined its legitimacy abroad before the first vote was cast. All major challengers to Khadyrov were consequently eliminated from the election lists. Malik Saidullaev, who is seen to be a highly favored candidate from the Chechen population for the office of president, said he met at the Kremlin with Vladislav Surkov, Putin's deputy chief of staff, who told him to quit because "an order had been issued to pull Kadyrov through."

Saidullaevs account echoes the experience of other candidates. Khusein Dzhabrailov, abruptly dropped out after talking with Surkov.

The last remaining major Kadyrov challenger, State Duma member Aslambek Aslakhonov, pulled out to take a job as presidential adviser after Putin's ex-chief of staff, Alexander Voloshin, called him to the Kremlin.

The authorities did not even pretend the elections to be free and fair. The road for Kadyrov was cleared

as if by a bulldozer. The president of Chechnya is determined long before the elections, and everything was done to assure his victory. The victory of any other candidate, except for the acting president of the Republic, would have led to re-division of power, which is not in the interests neither of Moscow or Chechnya.

3. ***"We only want your best!"*** **Discovering the dishonest behavior of the international actors on Chechnya**

(The Weak West)

Few if any of these issues took a prominent place on the agenda when Putin met with President Bush at Camp David for a summit in fall 2003. U.S. officials acknowledge that their attention to Russia's internal policies has taken a back seat to the war on terrorism. "I don't think this means these are unimportant issues," Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said in an interview while visiting Russia to discuss energy cooperation and nuclear non-proliferation and to confer with Putin. "But there's no doubt that since September 11th the focus has been on what we can do about international terrorism and homeland security."

The events of September 11th transformed the international security environment and gave President Putin an opportunity to transform the external contexts of the

Chechen War. As I have noted earlier, Putin has taken full advantage of these circumstances, emphasizing the linkage between Islamic terrorists in Chechnya and those in Afghanistan and Iraq. When U.S. officials criticize, Putin or his aides make clear they consider such comments out of bounds, citing their cooperation in the war on terrorism. "We have to get rid of [...] the habit of lecturing each other," Putin said in response to State Department criticism of Russia's human rights record in Chechnya. "We have to become partners. We have to support each other." Officials at the highest levels in international policy have adopted what the Putin administration is saying. International policy on Chechnya, since September 11th, has been subject in great part to maintaining a counterterrorism coalition with Russia. Sara Mendelson* takes a closer look on America's Russia policy:

Whatever the determinants of US policy on Chechnya are, it is a portrait of actors that are missing, of decisions not made, things not said, actions not taken. There's this weird Alice in Wonderland thing where they say everything is okay with Chechnya. There has been a tendency on the part of U.S. policymakers to talk about democracy and human rights when it seems strategically convenient. They then let democracy fade from the agenda when a focus on these issues threatens to interfere with traditional security matters. These wars have never been regarded as a "first-order problem" the way that Russia's dealings with Iran have. There has been instead a general bracketing of the issue. As one senior American diplomat intoned, the United States will not jeopardize its relationship with Russia over Chechnya.

Therefore US policy on Chechnya in both the Clinton and Bush administrations has been largely a rhe-

** - Sara Mendelson is an American politolog with a very cool, because critical and sensitive point of view on America's Foreign policy. I can really recommend her paper: "America's Russia policy", which can be found in the Internet and an article from her: The Putin Path, 2001 in the journal PONARS (political science).*



torical response to terrible events. Sometimes the tone has been harsher than at other times, but the US government's position has been essentially the same: there is not a military solution to Chechnya and there must be a negotiated settlement. The US government has for years also insisted that there be accountability for human rights abuses, that there be an end to the infamous 'mop-up' operations (*zachistki*), and the internally displaced persons return voluntarily. How was this rhetorical approach sustained, given that since the early 1990s the dominant US policy toward Russia has been its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community? If Russian troops have repeatedly violated the Geneva Conventions why has this not affected Russia's integration? And in the post-September 11th era, has the frame through which US policymakers view the war in Chechnya shifted? Is it still seen primarily as a human rights issue, as a successful contribution to the war on terrorism, or as a security threat? How has dissent inside government on this policy differed from dissent outside? Where were the NGOs and Congress on this issue?

Rhetoric during the First War

In the first war an important dynamic shaping the US response to Chechnya was the personal chemistry between the presidents, captured in part by President Clinton's nickname for Yeltsin, "ol' Boris", and Yeltsin's nickname for Clinton, "friend Bill". This chemistry had the unexpected effect of inhibiting criticism rather than encouraging it. Chechnya was seen as an inconvenient sore spot, to be brought up and then dropped. Clinton was highly sensitive to Yeltsin's domestic political situation and, according to his Russia adviser Strobe Talbott, was reluctant to "pile-on against Yeltsin". Clinton was "not comfortable about hectoring" the Russians to seek a political solution "when we didn't really know what that meant". He was reluctant to use his personal relationship with Yeltsin to push him hard on the war*.

* - Talbott, *The Russia Hand*. This dynamic was experienced by others in the Clinton administration: Former Secretary of Defense

Policymakers labeled the first war an "internal matter" or an "internal problem". The selective designation of things internal must have struck the Russians as somewhat odd. Through a variety of programs - including democracy assistance and market reform - the US government and NGOs were intensely involved in many internal issues, from dismantling nuclear weapons to training election observers to helping formulate government budgets. No one inside the US government was arguing that these issues were internal affairs and therefore the United States should not be involved.

This labeling of Chechnya, however, was not challenged in any significant way inside the government. There may even have been some genuine sympathy or anxiety associated with what the Russians were confronting. In 1994 many in the US government were still trying to cope with the impact of Soviet disintegration on the nuclear weapons complex. Fears of chaos inside Russia may have driven some more-or-less positive responses by senior officials to the war. Moreover, even if one was not sympathetic, the alternative policy course was unclear. No one seemed to know what to do about Chechnya. The war was regrettable but not a policy priority.

Rhetoric during the Second War

How did US policy respond to the second war? The war was no longer seen as an internal affair. The U.S. foreign policy toward Chechnya could be described as "Head-in-the-sand" approach. Withholding the second tranche of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan in December 1999 was indeed a response to the second war, but they apparently did not make this clear to the Russians at the time. Instead, the messages from the Americans were coming William Perry lamented that whatever good personal relationship he had developed with Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev, it did not carry over when discussing Chechnya. "It was like discussing abortion with a devout Catholic...it was a religious issue, not an objective issue." (Author's interview, Stanford, California, August 20, 2001).

across as mixed signals.

In 2000 the Bush election campaign picked up on this inconsistency in the Clinton administration's approach. But even Bush administration officials acknowledge that "the very critical language" used during the campaign disappeared once in office*. After September 11th the war in Chechnya seemed almost to take on another character for the administration. Because Bush was so focused on getting cooperation from Putin on basing troops in Central Asia, the war in Chechnya was downplayed and reinterpreted as part of the global war on terrorism. President Bush's endorsement of President Putin's approach to the war on terrorism speaks for itself: *First of all, President Putin has been a stalwart in the fight against terror. He understands the threat of terror, because he has lived through terror. He's seen terror firsthand and he knows the threat of terrorism...He understands what I understand, that there won't be peace if terrorists are allowed to kill and take innocent life. And, therefore, I view President Putin as an ally, strong ally, in the war against terror. And his actions are more than - speak louder than - his words. He has been a man of action when it comes to fighting terror, and I appreciate that very much**.*

Only in summer 2002 there was a slight change to be felt. Only then out of frustration and a sense of failure there raised voices which saw the war in Chechnya helps breed rather than eliminate extremism.

The role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Russian and Western Human Rights organizations have documented the disproportionate use of force and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, in addition to *zachistki* that regularly involve looting, ransom, rape and execution. They have detailed forced disap-

* - Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, Authors interview, senior Bush administration official, Washington, DC, July 29, 2002.

** - "President Bush, President Putin Discuss Joint Efforts Against Terrorism", June 27, 2002 White House news release.

pearances of up to 2,000 people and "filtration camps", where rebels and civilians are routinely tortured. They have been well documented: highly respected organizations have amassed much evidence that Russian federal forces have clearly and repeatedly violated the Geneva Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Among the most powerful pieces of evidence, in addition to lengthy interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch, is a survey done by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) 2001. This organization interviewed 1,142 refugees from Chechnya who were displaced by the war to Ingushetia. When the findings of the Chechnya survey are compared with a similar one the PHR did in Macedonia with Kosovar Albanians in the Spring of 1999, it becomes apparent that the level of violence against the civilian population in Chechnya by the Russian forces is quantitatively greater (with as many as four times the number of civilians killed) than the violence of Serb forces against the civilian population in Kosovo, a situation that roused the international community to action.

Given how destructive and extralegal these wars have been, and how well the abuses have been documented, why has US policy been mainly limited to rhetoric? A military option was never on the table, but why, for example, weren't sanctions imposed or other tougher policies implemented? And why were so few inside or outside the government advocating a different response? An important explanation lies in the nature of the problem itself and competing priorities**. And of course: Russia is not Serbia.

* - Sara Mendelson: *The Putin Path. Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Retreat. In: Problems of Post-Communism, vol. 47, no. 5, September/October 2000, pp 3-12.*

** - *There are numerous equities involved. Many inside and outside government have been reluctant to pursue a different policy on the war that either threatens these other equities- such as fighting terrorism and combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) - or that threatens Russian policymakers at the same time that the United States pursues policies over Russian objections, such as*

But according to the influence of the reporting of human rights organizations on Chechnya one has to say that the information in the reports of human rights organisations may be hard to ignore, but the recommendations to the United States advocated by HRW have not been. They have called for change in the rhetoric (use of the term 'war crime') and urged the United States to press Russia to account for the abuses through independent investigations. HRW would like accountability to be a "nonnegotiable minimum condition for enhanced political, economic and security relationships with the Russian Federation" and for the United States to "oppose payment of any pending loan installments payable to the Russian Federation for unrestricted general budgetary spending**".

The 'pressure' that organizations like HRW, Amnesty International and Memorial generate on this issue seems to be taken as ritualistic. For example, some government officials note the "drumbeat" that the NGOs had in the initial period of the second war has not been "maintained or sustained". There has been in fact no strong lobby for a more interventionist US policy. There has been no major effort in the United States to get the Russian actions in Chechnya classified as genocide.

Moreover, despite similar goals, NGOs working on democracy in Russia and human rights groups monitoring abuses in Russia have had almost no communication with one another. Human rights organizations have been consumed with collecting and disseminating information on Russian atrocities and abuses in Chechnya. Communication or coordination is not viewed as central to their mission.

Other factors limit their impact as well: groups that do release information designed to pressure policymakers to use the words 'war crimes' in reference to Chechnya may refrain from mounting larger campaigns to stop the war for fear of being perceived as 'political**'. As missile defense and NATO expansion.

* - Human Rights Watch, *Welcome to Hell, pp. 96-97.*

** - Reason for this reluctance can be seen also in the Russian re-registration law by June, 1999. Memorial had to delete the phrase: "the

human rights groups, they are "not for peace, per se**".

Not surprisingly, nearly 4 years into the second war on Chechnya US policy remains largely rhetorical.

The Weak West

Western leaders have been quick to make friends with Putin even as he makes clear to them that he is not interested in human rights. It is a reminder that the Chechen war and the many problems faced by activists in Russia are not really front-and-center for policymakers dealing with Russia, even though the policymakers make the importance of democracy in Russia central to every speech**.

Now Bush's America and Putin's Russia are fighting on the same side of the war on terrorism. In exchange to Putin's support for America in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States have - at least until now - offered Russia the same reciprocal arrangements that was once offered to the Cold War allies. In other words an agreement not to mention the Russian army's abuse of civilians in Chechnya and not to talk too loudly about Russian assistance for Saddam Hussein.

This principle - the enemy of my enemy is not just my friend but my very, very best friend, no matter how appalling he actually may be - is nothing new in American foreign policy. It was a central tenet of the Cold War, and a lot of damage it did, too.

protection of citizens' rights" from their organizational name, goals and objectives. The reason? According to the officials, NGOs do not have the right to protect citizens; that is the business of the state alone.

* - Letter from a human rights organization to the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya. In: Sara Mendelson: *America's Russia Policy.*

** - But critics remain still largely rhetorical, like for example the open letter from Colin Powell (U.S. secretary of state) published in *Izvestija* in January 2004 (Washington Post, Jan 26, 2004). Or the meeting between Putin and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in February 2004, who refused to discuss the War in Chechnya in public - "only behind closed doors".

JASON FLOWER

Jason Flower is Poland-based muso / label dude of Canadian origin; once a member of MEXICAN POWER AUTHORITY and THIRD WORLD PLANET, he released a bunch of old East Euro punk too...



? OK, so who is Jason Flower?

Jason Flower? That's me, born in May 1973, grew up in a big old house, a 5 minute walk from the ocean, in a small town called Sidney, which is 15 minutes from the city of Victoria, on Vancouver Island.

Just a few things that cross my mind lately that I like are: nature... 1920's-1970's films... travelling... bikes... records... anything orange... language... islands... clean air... sincerity... meeting new people constantly... listening and playing all kinds of music... how's that?!

? What musical projects have you been involved in previously? What's the situation now? Did you make any progress as a musician over the years?

I first started playing music with others and writing to people in the 'underground' (then there still was one) when i was 11 years old; 1984.

In the early '90's I counted how many groups / projects I'd been in and it came to 20. I'm gonna restrict it to the ones that DID get out of the basement, or released

something. Let's see what i can remember now after all these years:

DEMENTIA: 1987-88 (14 yrs. old, vocals). Death/black-grind with gorey lyrics. We recorded a 2 or 3 song demo.

TOMORROWS' HOSTILITY: 1988-89 (15 yrs. old, vocals). Canadian-style punk rock/hardcore with absurd lyrics. We did four different amateur studio recordings (about half was lost by the engineer who moved to Europe in '89). We played live once.

STICK FARM: 1989-91 (16-18 yrs. old, guitar and secondary vocals). As MRR said: "a mix between NOMEANSNO and NEUROSIS", well they were rather accurate. We were into alot of the more strange hardcore and punk groups, but definitely preferred the heaviness of metal and grunge. Quite good socio-political and poetic lyrics, some silly ones too. We were quite successful; had two 7"s released, and appeared on a number of vinyl compilations and cassettes. I like our first demo the most. Lots of concerts too...

(now is where it starts to get VERY hazy, because i was quite a 'band slut', playing in 4 different

groups at the same time over a number of years...)

MENSTRUAL SPONGE: 1989? (I played guitar). Legendary Dada kitch noise shit from my friend Maxine Smolkin, whom I claim outright to be the goddess of style. Just played one gig with Max – it was her project... great fun.

DAYWORLD: 1990 (vocals). My very good friend Josh Stull tricked me into singing in his funk band. I couldn't sing funk. Two gigs and a demo.

Embarrassing. But I still love yah Josh!

CROTCH: 1991 (guitar). Thankfully another chance to give Maxine a microphone. This time, a short lived but rather highly-spoken-of grindcore group. Keep in mind this was when grind was still more on the hc side of sound, and not a sub-genre of macho metal shit. Our few gigs ripped!

PEZ: 1991 (fresh out of high-school, bass and back up vocals). Melodic hardcore and punk rock. Played a few shows, (one with NOFX, whom I've never liked), recorded a demo. We were pretty good, but Glen's vocals, ouch! Glen reformed PEZ as THE STUPES and released a pile of 7"s.

BLACK KRONSTADT: 1992 (drums). 100% Anarcho-crust. I was the original drummer in BK, and we played one great show in Vancouver with the pre-SUBMISSION HOLD group INSULT TO INJURY. Our whole set got encored!!



I was working long shifts at a local restaurant and the rest of the group (unemployed) kept forcing me to jam at 11 pm after 8 hours at work, it was too much so I quit. I have a recording of our songs, and they later appeared with a different drummer on the first 7". Wolf is still a good friend of mine and has a new group named ISKRA.

ENFA/LAK: 1993-94? (drums). Anarcho-feminist experimental punk with multiple basses (no guitar), violin; 3-4 women depending on the line-up. Lots of gigs and one pathetic sounding demo which I simply can't listen to; it's horrible!

MEXICAN POWER AUTHORITY: 1991-97 (vocals and secondary percussion). I won't label us. But I will say it is still to this day the best musical experience I have ever had. We presented a perfect satire of underground music, and people couldn't take their eyes off of us live. It was brilliant. I miss it very much, and nothing seems to match the professionalism and execution which we obtained. We released many tapes, 7"s, LPs and CDs. One tour of Canada. Lest we forget...

SEAT BELT: 1992-94 (guitar and vocals). Post-rock / pre-emo, I don't know what we were, but we played a few instrumental gigs, and released two 60 minute demos. The second tape has a bunch of guest women vocalists. Eric is in HANGED UP now (they have a few albums out on Constellation Rec. from Quebec), and Damon also has a successful group, but I don't know the name. HERMIT: 1992 (or 93?) and again in 1998 (drums, noise). HERMIT is/was/always will be Eric Boros, however I appeared on the first ever HERMIT 7" EP (also recorded it), a few tapes, and also the first one ever recorded in Europe... and played a number of shows.

THIRD WORLD PLANET: 1995-99 (drums and vocals). Ever-changing heaviness – from crust, to nihilist noise core, to experimental and monumental eclecticism.



Gigged in the USA, toured Canada, toured Europe. Released a flexi, a few 7"s, an LP, and a lot of tapes. Had a pretty pathetic ending, but when we were a Canadian two-piece, we ruled!.. Past is past.

I also did guest appearances on a lot of recordings; SUBMISSION HOLD, ULTRA VIRES, NINTH HOUR, etc. But for the groups I was in, that's all I can recall. There definitely were others, and there are no doubt recordings to accompany them, but everything is packed in Canada. I can't remember any more!

In 1999 I started taking singing lessons of traditional folk songs of Eastern European countries; Bulgaria, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Estonia, etc. I also fell in love with Middle Eastern hand drums (darboukas, tablas, etc.) This turned into my girlfriend Anna and I creating a repertoire which we took to the streets of Switzerland for busking. We were very successful. We did it again over a few summers, and then stopped.

In 2002 I did a song with my close friend Pille Weibel, in Winterthur, Switzerland. It appeared on a CDR compilation released by Dhyana. I sang in very broken Polish (now I speak quite fluently). The song isn't itself that good, but working with Pille was a great pleasure, and the lyrics/music were defi-

nately therapeutic for us both. That's the last thing I've completed. Now? My friend Kuba should begin working on a lo-fi soundtrack for a film he'll create, but I don't know if it'll really happen. But I have jammed with his group, MIKROFLOTA. I've played in some other groups here in Poland, but nothing serious or substantial has come from any of them.

Progression? There has been a huge personal style progression. Now I haven't played anything seriously since 1999, and when I jam with people I'm often unsatisfied with them stylistically. I want so much to play, but if there's no magic, or it's something that I've already played, then it's simply unsatisfying. I try to be patient... I'm looking forward to being in Canada again.

Fanzine

In 1986-87 I started a fanzine named "Dethrip" covering hardcore punk, death metal, and the beginnings of grind. The whole "crossover" between metal and punk was occurring and everything was pretty mixed up. All that said, it was still a rather physically dangerous time to be in-between the two scenes. The fanzine lasted through my high-school years until 1989, and did rather well in its 4 issues.

Radio

From 1988, through until 1995 I

hosted a number of weekly radio programs on CFUV 102 FM, which was broadcast all over Vancouver Island (a BIG island), as well as reaching other coastal towns in British Columbia (Canada) and Washington (USA). (I even recall sometimes getting collect call requests from prison in-mates in some small US towns!!) The most popular show was for about 2 years doing Friday night 10-12, but personally the most important was the self-conceived "Scene Ventage" program, which was a half hour spotlight on new local groups (interviews, promos, etc.) Each show ended with an unknown local classic. For me it was like educating the youth as well as stirring up some sentiment in the older local musicians/on-lookers.

Out of "Scene Ventage" on air, came the monthly scene report of the same name, featured in Off-beat Magazine, a local student magazine which unfortunately after 40 years of existence has now been stopped.

Sporadic Studios

In 1989, after I experimented recording some of my own bands, I started offering to record other local groups. Many groups had already come and gone over the years, never recording anything because they couldn't even afford the other cheap local basement studio prices. I simultaneously decided that if I was gonna help record, then I wanted to offer my help releasing them as well. In all honesty, there was no financial gain at all; zero. It was experience, both technical and social. I have always been very sentimental to the Victoria music scene. By helping document it, I knew I was doing a good thing. In 1991 I bought my own recording equipment and up until 1997 recorded an insane number of local groups, both at home and also in concert. In many cases these represent the sole recordings of these groups' existence.

These were mostly very young musicians who were playing in

their first groups and had no clue how to release vinyl or even a tape. I guided them thru every step of arranging the production, but they paid for it, and I took no percent for myself. Later I started charging a token \$100 for a full session, as long as it took from start to finish, but still no profit on the releases. I definitely have my favourites and most sentimental/magical recordings I look back on, and others which were complete flops... some great recordings were: JONAS, SUBMISSION HOLD, READYMEN, M.P.A., the Frenzy Anarchist Festival (live), RENDER USELESS, DRONE, etc... but in the end one of the craziest stories must be that I recorded the first punk band of the 14-15 year olds who later went on to become stars in the groups 3 INCHES OF BLOOD and HOT HOT HEAT!!! Their name was PILOT LIGHT.

? What can make a Canadian move to Poland, of all places?

Foolishness, blind ignorance, insanity, self-punishment... love! Well, I've always been interested in things unfamiliar to me... Honestly, I wanted a challenge and adventure. I've been intrigued specifically with Poland since 1987, when I saw a TV documentary on Polish jazz and bought a pirate cassette copy of the Polish comp. LP "Jak Punk To Punk". I was already writing with people all over the world, and made some Polish contacts, of which all were lost when communism fell. My desire to go to Europe was well planned, and when I first came in '97, I stayed. I didn't move to Poland however until 1999, when I met a sympathetic woman named Anna, who spent Winter 1999-2000 teaching me Polish. We've been together ever since. Ah, love... anyways, I've been thru all the Balkans a few times, as well as to ex-SSR Georgia.

But man, if you wanna hear about my opinion on Poland, woah! Believe me, it's no sweet story of sentiment! This place can be so incredibly nerve-wrecking! The post-communist mentality; the

grey reality; the macho attitudes, the alcoholism, the cynicism, the apathy... sometimes it really gets me down. Sometimes it's too much compromise for me. And for that reason, after living here three years, I've had enough.

? Does your name mean someone who flows or someone who blooms?

Never thought about that before... my name comes from that which blooms. I'm told it was originally "fleur" or "flouer" and later became what it is today. I like flowers, and I luckily don't have asthma or hayfever!

? There has been, I assume, more than one record label that you did start. What are their differences - in policy and elsewhere?

There's been three, but the first hardly counts.

1 - **Dethrip Productions**. I issued in an extremely small number the Dementia 2 song tape sometime in '88, and in in early '89 a classic German punk and hc compilation tape titled (with a French name) "L'union Fait La Force!" Dethrip had a planned compilation tape to accompany a final issue, but I never released it (but I have the masters!)

2 - **Break Even**, began in early 1989 as an outlet for the recordings I'd started doing. The first recording I did for a band that I didn't personally play in was DISTORTED INFLUENCE (with my friend Andy, ex-TOMORROWS' HOSTILITY). I recorded them, offered to lay-out the cover, have them duplicated, and generally promote the group in return for them putting "Break Even" and my address on it. In case you don't know "Break Even" means to only get back what \$\$ you put out. Thus began my d.i.y. recording career. Nearly every release on the label was recorded at one of my mobile studios. Later I started doing 7"s, then an LP, a few CDs, and even a flexi. I'd say I paid for less than half of them; instead I theoretically worked for the groups in exchange of them

putting "Break Even" on them and creating the illusion of a label. Eventually it became quite popular to be on Break Even; the young and active groups were getting international exposure, and so was I. Break Even released some 40+ cassettes, with productions varying anywhere from 30 copies to 1500 copies, about 20 different 7"s, maybe 5 CDs (?), an LP, and a flexi. I was not discriminant of any one style – if it was independent I was willing to help. Styles ranged: electro noise, sXe, neo-classical, death metal, punk rock, thrash, grind, post punk, emo, grunge, crust, hardcore, experimental, etc. Each release had very different packaging; many of the covers were produced for free or for very cheap, and this helped keep their sale price considerably lower than other local releases. I'd always been obsessed with the history of Victoria underground, and so ended up remixing and legitimately re-issuing a number of old groups as well, such as THE NEOS, SLUDGE CONFRONTATIONS, etc. 95% of the Break Even releases were local or Vancouver Island groups, and all but one were Canadian (until I moved to Europe, and then everything changed). In '97 I made a conscious decision to try and start to generate some income for myself from the sales. Break Even in Europe – while in Canada I'd always exclusively traded Break Even releases against "exotic" Eastern European and Central/South American underground music. When I got to Europe I decided it was time to start realising some my own dreams of semi-exotic releases; Bulgarian Punk Archives, Nepal/Indian Metal, etc. The miniscule amount of profit DID help me, because I was squatting, and my costs were very low. Having pocket money seriously helped me survive, but only marginally. Last Break Even release I did was 1998?..

3 - **Supreme Echo** - is somewhat an evolution from Break

Even, with some firm standards which will from now on always be there: high quality packaging, tons of information, DMM mastering, and exclusively archival releases. Supreme Echo may even reissue some of the older Break Even material, but in a far superior form. It takes a LOOOOOONG time to complete my releases, and I think it's clearly evidential why, when you see/hear/read them.

? Some of the releases you did are of pretty much archival character.

On the contrary; if people would dig a bit deeper and start to understand the roots of the current groups they listen to, then they might discover some unturned stones and actually get inspired to create something new rather than just copying the latest trends. As well, most genuine archivists are bringing to attention some totally obscure artists that influenced a whole generation and were never credited. Or who have reached a huge cult status, yet never had their true story told - or a completely unknown artist that was so incredibly talented and innovative, yet never publicly recognised... you get the idea. I think it's incredibly fascinating to reveal the mysteries behind the past. I try not to romanticize it, but I do want to shade in some colours and give people some impressions with my words.

? What do you think is the value of (re-)issuing the recordings that have a bigger historical, rather than aestetical, value? Can't throwing resources in old crap hinder the development of a current scene?

WE must remember, (and I say this without any tragic or apathetic feelings) that more or less everything HAS been done before; it's all regurgitation. I prefer the more authentic and less studied raw expressions opposed to the retro/100th generation garbage. There is a lot of crap out there. What I document is history - I'm not responsible for their compositions,

nor whether they had the opportunity to have made a proper recording, or had some photographs taken. The archives I compile are authentic to the original material which was discovered.

Yes, there must be a value in these releases because people are learning from them, the artists are thanking me for what I've done, they get positive and even outstanding reviews, they slowly but surely sell, and I enjoy the work of creating them!

? To my knowledge, some of your releases have not been properly authorized by the artists.

Not exactly. Any release with my name on it is either 100% authorized, or every attempt possible has been made to contact the artists.

But that is not enough of an answer, so I will explain the exceptions: the Bulgarian Archive was a co-release with Ivailo Tonchev, from Bulgaria. Ivailo said that many of the musicians had in fact disappeared / left Bulgaria when communism ended, and a few were now stars, he thought they would have wanted ridiculous amounts of money for recordings that they in fact didn't even own (the Bulgarian state owned any officially released material from communist times). So we released 500 copies with the clear statement on the cover in English and Bulgarian that it wasn't authorized, but our intentions were not of profit, but simply sentiment. Later Ivailo in fact made contact with nearly all the groups on the compilation, so in the end it wasn't a boot at all!

CRISIS / MILLENIUM split 7" – I was in India 6 months, and found two tapes, but no actual musicians. I sent letters, included IRC's, and got no response. In the end, my good friend Pavel Tusl (in Czech) and I issued 300 copies, and even sent copies to Nepal and India, but still no response. The 7" has since become a collectors item and been bootlegged twice; on LP in Brasil, and on CD in Sweden. The boot-



leggers never thought to contact me, haha!

The Polish Archive I did has 14 groups, twelve authorised and two unauthorised - one solo artist is dead, and the other group I have never been able to contact but their inclusion was imperative to the overview I presented.

For me, the biggest profit I can have from my work is meeting the people. Meeting old Polish punks, old Canadian punks, old Georgian punks, etc. is a real life experience and exchange. People show me who they are TODAY, and also speak about their past, it's very exciting and rewarding (also sad sometimes). For this reason, I absolutely see no reason why in most cases you shouldn't attempt to contact the group!

All 6 of my new releases are archives, and they are all authorised by at least one member of the group.

? Do you see much if any problem in the existence of bootlegs - as you do some reissues that may or may not cover the same ground?

You're making some tricky

parallels here! I don't consider any of my labels' work bootlegs. If it's got my name on it, I'm proud of the work, and I can recall all the interaction with the musicians and people who helped make it a reality.

Bootlegs don't have an interaction with the artist at all. They are fan-made, and made in secret.

Again, if it has my name on it, I stand behind it 100%. I know many bootleggers around the world and what I do is very different than them. Such allegations of me being on the same grounds, are fruitless and unfair.

? When do you think it can be a justified practice?

If someone feels they absolutely must do a bootleg, then they should do it as high quality and with as much accurate information and as attractive as possible. They have no royalties to pay, so they should invest it into being a quality product. They could also bootleg something and still have it anonymously sent to the group. I remember METALLICA once saying that the only bootlegs they didn't like were the ones that they

never received copies of.

? Do you happen to view punk rock as something of any value politically?

Well, yes. But I prefer "punk" rather than "punk rock" and we must remember just how violently different each person's opinion can be of what "punk" means and represents. For me it's self-sufficiency / grass roots, complete freedom of expression, non-aggressive, the right to be freaky, to be non-discriminant of race / sex / religion / diet / habits / artistic preferences etc., and creating something of yer own. But even saying that, every person will interpret those morals according to how they personally envision those values.

I find that most people I meet nowadays that blatantly tag themselves "p-u-n-k" are the biggest fascists of all, with their set of orthodox conservatisms associated with whatever sub-genre they have claimed they are a part of. It's sad. We are all just people. I understand that there are times in our lives when we feel we need to alienate ourselves from society and

diversity, but man people can be so judgemental and so much wanting to be labelled. The most judgemental people disappear as quickly as they appeared in the first place.

At the more serious core, the extremely passionate and creative people who are simply exchanging their ideas / concerns / creations across all borders / languages - THAT IS punk. Every generation has had their own version of punk, it's always existed. **? Do you still get much kicks out of music?**

Kicks - Well, it's 2004. I'm not a teenager anymore. I can't do the same thing twice, I can only move forward. Working with my friends in M.P.A. was just such a professional experience, as well as being hilariously fun and somehow even spiritual, that I find it hard to match up to it. I've been too transient to settle and work on anything. I need a lot of peace to be creative. Victoria always gave me a lot of tranquility and inspiration. Here in Poland, my life is too distracting; I'm struggling to get things done and pay my rent... everybody lives in flats, it's so damn impersonal. I'm looking forward to moving back to Canada and starting a new band with some people I really love playing with.

? As a person actively involved in punk scenes in North America, Western and Eastern Europe, can you come up with any observations as to how they are different as far as principles and general conditions are concerned?

Well I was active in North America. In Europe I just toured once with T.W.P. I know a lot of people still, but my personal role / position in "the scene" has drastically changed due to being so transient and having to re-priorise my whole life... but ok I am active, only in a different way, so...

In Europe squats are the living extension of alternative culture. 30 to 40 years of their existence has resulted in society at least recog-

nizing them. They're extremely important and they shape the whole communal traditions which Europe is based on. In Europe, as a general rule, people do not often steal each others' shit. There is at least some level of humanity and morale even in the stinkiest drunkard shit-holes in Europe. Whereas in North America, squats can be sketchy. North America in general, despite once been hippy heaven, is a pretty immoral continent, and people's desires to be extreme often result in them overlooking basic customs like hospitality.

Concerts:

North Americans may be nice, but they generally don't know how to treat touring groups. European hospitality guarantees a beautiful hot veggie meal, endless beer, and a place to sleep even IF you only get paid \$100 (but usually more is given). In North America you're lucky if you get \$20, some pasta, and a safe place to park your van to sleep in. Those are just generalizations, but they are rather true. Europeans in general smoke 10 times as much tobacco and drink far too much. Gigs start so late that the touring groups would often prefer to go to sleep than perform (DROP DEAD, DETESTATION, BATTLE OF DISARM - just to name a few I've seen hand on). In Canada, you can't even smoke inside of bars!!! I love it!! My apologies to any of my friends who smoke cigarettes, but fuck you and yer stinky habit!!!

Now more than ever, North America is embracing the exoticism of foreign languages in punk rock. But it will NEVER match up to Europe. Europe has always been open-armed to each region / country's unique language in music. That's why South American and Asian groups have more luck touring Europe. People are so excited to be exposed to it. Whereas especially in America, people complain that they don't understand what the people are singing about - but it's more or less xenophobia and laziness.

All this said, I only distributed foreign language music when I lived in Canada, and I slowly but surely did sell / trade it all. So these are again, just generalisations.

? Now that Poland has become a part of NATO and is about to enter the European Union, does it stand a bigger than previously danger of having its culture (including punk rock culture) polluted, corrupted and destroyed by the outside influences?

It's already too late, I don't know if there would be much difference without NATO. Poland IS a corrupt country filled with under-qualified bureaucrats at every level. The EU will economically hit people aged over 60 years old very hard because they won't be able to adjust to further changes - they are already poor and alone. They will continue to go generally uncared for and slowly die. Poles have lovingly embraced supermarkets, malls, and the big yankee style mega-markets. But that's their democratic right, and people always want what they've never had. Unfortunately the result is the perpetual closure of small businesses and further expansion of Western corporations. I know Russia must be going thru their own crises in many ways, but here we are in the absolute hub between East and West, and truly the center of Europe. Poland has been changing drastically ever since communism fell. And sadly but understandably, many of Poland's most educated and ambitious young people are leaving Poland to seek the life they deserve - one where they have a good standard of living and are treated as valuable INDIVIDUALS of society.

Polish punk? It's already nearly obliterated by the over-bearing monster of American culture. Everybody looks to the American bands. Ten years ago it was RESIST and MASSKONTROLL / DEFIANCE... now it's HIS HERO IS GONE, TRAGEDY, and NEUROSIS. Sure bands generally still sing in

Polish, but very few groups resemble a musical extension of what the past has laid down as a foundation. It's happening more and more everywhere. What can be done? Nothing.

? What sort of experiences did you have contacting or viewing the world of ex-USSR? What are your favourite bands and the least credible stories outta here?

Canadians were NOT fed anti-communist propaganda thru our education system... well, at least my generation wasn't in the '80's. BUT as North Americans we did have a first hand glance at all the stupid patriotic American films making out the "better dead than red" kind of attitude. We were definitely told very little about Russia. There was a Russian exchange student in my high school. I remember there were some pretty stupid stereotypes, but when people saw how she could drink alcohol, she quickly became popular! (I just know this via gossip - I wasn't much of a drink / party guy in high school).

Cheap impressions fed to me that DID affect my view - it was grey, a lot of industry, winter all year-round (!), always behind the fashion of the West. Of course all these views changed as soon as I had contact with people there.

My first contact with Russians was with some metal guy in St. Petersburg who sent me heaps of punk and wave records. I had much more luck with contact in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech / Slovakia, ex-Yugo countries, etc.

Some favourite ex-USSR groups: KONETS KAPITALIZMA, Lado Burduli and RETSEPTI, MANDRAZH, Yanka & Egor Letov & GRAZHDANSKAYA OBORONA, J.M.K.E., INSTRUKTSIYA PO OBORONE, all Tornis Rec. bands, David Tuhmanov, ARIEL, (early) TELEVIZOR, LIKSMA MASTURBACIJA, OB'YEKT NASMESHEK.

? Do we stand much of a chance of finding punk rock

scene in North Korea when Bush Jr. bombs it into civilization?

When some monkey-faced yankee farmer (whom I don't even like thinking about) bombs the fuck out of North Korea, I'm more concerned about the entire population, and not just some middle class suburban teenage boys' ambitions to sound like LIMP BIZKIT! What can I say?!

? Do you in any way view yourself as a researcher or an explorer?

Tricky words here - I feel like I'm being compared to Christopher Columbus, haha! In the sense of discovering / researching and exposing little known alternative cultures from unheard regions of the world - ok, yes. Look at Luk Haas, the guy is a genius; if ever there was someone to roll out the red carpet for, it's Luk. I like to think of it as underground / alternative ethnology. But in these cases, there's no cultural imperialism from our sides because the imperialism has already arrived by itself! ...and we need to remember, that this is still counter culture. This ain't Mongolian top-ten techno on commercial radio, it's the working class people of the country screaming for a change. Anyways, despite people's naivety, there HAS been a youth-music scene in even very isolated places since the 1960's; people may find it hard to believe there were psychedelic groups in India or Mongolia, but there were.

Where the scenes are still young, that's where punk is still thriving. NY, SF, LA, UK all rocked in 1977, and now in 2004 the Middle East / Central Russia / Southern Asia are punk as fuck!

? How can you be traced down and contacted? Who and why should do it?

Email is certainly the best. I have my hotmail address (kwiateczku@hotmail.com) set to be quite exclusive, but personal emails should get through without problems. Otherwise my permanent Canadian address is 100%

safe: Jason Flower / 2185 Amity Drive / Sidney, B.C. / V8L-1B2 / Canada.

People who are interested in accessing my recordings from my studio, obtaining old and new releases - there are over 70 titles and you are welcome to contact me!

People who trade old rare records - I love trading all styles. From Russia and ex-USSR I'm most wanting these: Alexandr Gradsky "Romans O Vlyublyonnyh" LP, Alexandr Gradsky "Razmyshleniya Shuta" LP, BAYAN MONGOL LP, SOYOL ERDENE LP, OB'YEKT NASMESHEK LP, IVERIYA 7" EP etc.

People who know of some obscure old recordings that they feel are worth being exposed - it's never too late to document the past. Recording quality is not important - raw energy is important. Anyone who is a personal friend of, and can introduce me to Egor Letov - I would love to meet this man. I don't care about all the rumours - I am sure he must be a very interesting man.

I gotta say - "active" is a funny word for me. I am still very active, but being an archivist means hundreds of hours cleaning music, interviewing people, travelling, and working on images. It's not like when I was at every gig and constantly recording new bands. I'm glad I haven't been completely forgotten!



WHEEL OF DHARMA



KOLESO DHARMY (Russian for WHEEL OF DHARMA) has formed in the South Russian town of Volzhskiy (near Volgograd, with some members actually coming from the bigger city) cca. 1993. It was perhaps Russia's earliest straight edge band; it was made up of punks and it played raw punk rock - with lyrics that were quite political and rather radical, especially for the time. They've recorded a couple of demos in 1994 and 1995 and played in St. Petersburg at TaMtAm club in 1994 - the singer, Punch, broke a bottle over his head and the stage was all covered in blood. The band has been going through lots of lineup changes, with the music getting harsher and more metally over time; the next demo that had some sort of circulation, "Zoon Politicon", was recorded in 1999. A couple of years later Punch moved to Tampere, Finland, and a new era for the band had started - some Finnish musicians were recruited, and two CDs released - self-titled demo and "Purgatory" album. The band did a tour in Eastern Europe in 2004 with Finnish band BASTA BASTA, with whom they'd released a split CDR. Punch had also re-

corded a solo album while in Finland. This interview was conducted in January 2004 at Troitskiy Most cafe, after WHEEL OF DHARMA played in St. Petersburg (Moloko club and Klizma squat)... the conversation was partly in Russian and partly in English. For more information etc. please refer to their website - www.wheelofdharma.tk.

Punch - vocals, **Tuomas** - guitar, **Wisa** - bass, **Jere** - drums (but I may have confused their voices at times - sorry!)

Szarapow: How were the gigs that you played at Moloko, at the squat and in Moscow compared to your previous visits to Russia?

Tuomas: I think they were getting better than the previous ones in both places. We've played Jerry Rubin once but not in Moloko before. And we've had a very good time.

Szarapow: And compared to the first visit of the band to St. Petersburg ten years ago?

Punch: More friends.

Szarapow: Didn't you know anyone then?

Punch: We didn't know anyone then, and in general... The audi-

ence consisted exclusively of shit-punks and fascists. I fucking kicked them in the face when they tried to get to the stage.

Szarapow: Now we only have shit-punks left.

Punch: All in all, people change. The scene is changing gradually, getting more positive.

Szarapow: And how did you change? In those ten years...

Punch: Molecularly. I grew older. Perhaps I learned to scream better. I lost edge (laughs). But it's bullshit, maybe I will find it again soon 'cause in my heart I remained a straightedger. No, seriously, I think of myself as a non-drinker. At a certain moment it helped me somehow, and I do not treat [drinking] as a hobby or a pastime.

[Wisa arrives.]

Szarapow: I think I only asked how this visit went compared to your previous visits to Russia.

Wisa: The one at the squat was really different from all the other gigs, I think maybe it resembled more the gigs that WHEEL OF DHARMA has been playing when it was all-Russian band, but it was really cool, I really liked the vibe in the squat. And I think the gig in Moloko was quite OK.

Tuomas: Wisa's very critical towards our own performances.

Szarapow: A friend of mine said that as much as he watched, he didn't see you do a soundcheck [at Moloko], you just plugged in and went ahead.

Jere: Yeah, that's true.

Wisa: We did a short soundcheck, at least me and Jere, I don't know about you. It was very short, everything seemed to be in order. The gig in Moscow wasn't as good as the last time.

Punch: The longest soundcheck was in a squat! (laughter)

Szarapow: Anyway, how did the Finnish version of the band come to being?

Punch: KOLESO DHARMY has died away by the year 2000, it was gradually dying down...

Szarapow: The inertia was fading.

Punch: And when I'd decided to move to Finland, me and [guitarist Oleg] Adzhigitov have decided to start something anew. We were going to go together. Mira [Punch's then-wife] found two people who could play bass and drums for us. And at the last moment, when we already bought tickets, Adzhigitov said: "I'm not going." He had some sort of depression, inner issues. And he was like: "Go alone." Of course I went. I also got pissed off at him and decided: "Fuck him, I will play guitar myself and sing."

And then we got together, had some rehearsals - in short, twenty days after I arrived we had our first gig, at Black and Green Days [festival]. We played old songs. We did a recording, and then Tuomas joined and I was just doing vocals. **Zhenya** [Knives&Forks zine]: There was also a band called SOK...

Punch: There was a band called SOK, Wisa and Jere played there, it was a sort of art punk project. It was before I arrived, they're friends, school chums, classmates.

Szarapow: You didn't know them before...?

Punch: Mira found them, they were from the same school.

Jere: I heard about this first gig that was going to be at Black and Green festival where KOLESO DHARMY

was supposed to play, and then we heard that there was no drummer coming and I was supposed to play drums for them. I just got a tape of KOLESO DHARMY, and I listened to it when I was going to school or whatever. I just had it on my headphones and I tried to figure out how to play these songs, and then Punch came and we had maybe one or two weeks for practice... Punch came alone, we got Wisa in and we practiced very hard for two weeks. The gig was well-[received], and it was a great privilege for me to play.

Punch: They had played without me, just before...

Jere: Songs from the tape, yeah. I don't know how Punch feels about this all, I just think it was very fun. And when we met I think right along it was quite a nice feeling of playing. Also this practice was really nice. I was very happy when he decided to stay in Finland that we were able to continue with the thing.

Szarapow: So it was first professional acquaintance / contact, and then it got personal?

Wisa: I knew Punch from 2000 when I was in Volgograd with a circus group. I've found out he's such a good guy, that's why I told Jere it would be a good opportunity to play drums for KOLESO DHARMY on this gig.

Szarapow: So how did you come into picture?

Tuomas: After the Black and Green Days gig there was about one year pause with the band, and Wisa asked me to join because Punch wanted to concentrate on vocals only, he didn't want to play guitar simultaneously. Of course now he has a solo career but that's a totally different story. But Wisa knew me because earlier we were playing in the same band for a while. We just started rehearsing in 2002. In the beginning we rehearsed more intensively, there's maybe some months that we go with no practicing at all, and then there comes a more active period.



Wisa: I think now the rehearsals are easier than in the beginning, we don't have to rehearse that much, or that often. We don't have a rehearsal space of our own so that's a bit of a problem.

Jere: We have to crash into other bands' rehearsal spaces and play there.

Szarapow: Are there any other bands that you guys play in?

Jere: Yes. Are we supposed to talk about them?

Wisa: I play in a power pop group called JADECROON. Then I play in this sort of improvisational project.

Tuomas: There's this punk / garage / whatever band BLUBBERHEADS, we have been playing over ten years but it's not very active nowadays anymore. But then I play drums in a band called A.V.K. and that's like Finnish rock or something. Then there's this pseudojazz group SPACE ROCKET, I play guitar in that.

Szarapow: So basically WHEEL OF DHARMA is the most extreme hardcore band either of you is involved in?

Tuomas: Definitely.

Szarapow: Lyosha, can you talk about your solo stuff?

Punch: I've spent a long time thinking and scheming, and in the end I decided that it's time to put pressure on the people who do not listen to punk rock. It's already obvious with people into punk rock - if they like WHEEL OF DHARMA, then at any rate they will pay attention to the lyrics etc. If people, say, aren't interested in punk rock or hardcore then they will never find out what we sing about, right? They wouldn't even want to hear it at all. And here's some blatnyak [a type of criminal urban folk music in Russia], but the lyrics are totally different! It's a subtle idea, involving humour. It's the same thing basically as [seventies singer Vladimir] Vysotskiy. A lot of people love Vysotskiy and sing his songs. And you can put a lot of meaning precisely into these songs, into

acoustic stuff, the type that people sing around the fire when they drink. All of our country is made up of old tourists, students, engineers, a very high percentage of people who listen to and love acoustic music. It's anarcho-blatnyak. I have recorded four songs already, I want to do eight or ten and do an album. The cover is finished, it's called "And Then I'm Coming Home - Author's Military and Patriotic Songs for the Littlest Ones." In the



spirit of attitude to children. You see, I feel pity for people, they are like children. People who believe in a big state, believe in a master, believe in some kind of authority - they are like children, they can't take any criticism. They become a part of the system and they act like children "because that's how it's got to be." A kid is asked - "Who do you want to be?" "I'll be this or that". And grown people just become that and they continue like children.

Szarapow: Speaking about the things that people should be doing. There's a cliché saying that hardcore bands should be political. Why do you think KOLESO DHARMY is one of the few Russian-language bands that embody this cliché?

Punch: If we're one of the few, what sort of cliché can we talk about? It means we are an excep-

tion.

Szarapow: On a world-wide scale. There are much more political bands in Finland.

Punch: What else there is to sing about? The man has two worlds - inner and outer, and that's it. Everything else is just variants. They're fucking chickenshit, they're scared. Or they've got such attitude, like they don't give a shit, this sort of careless apathy. It's old, I don't know, Siberian punk... I don't like this attitude to what happens in the world, in society. You have to at least be free in your soul, but these people don't even want to...

There were ordinary criminals [blatniye] in GULAG, and there were the politicals, who got there for 58th article [in Stalin-era Criminal code]. The blatniye never ever mentioned Stalin's name, they didn't criticise him. Why? Because they respected this power, they didn't give a crap, they've made a world of their own. But they didn't criticise this authority, they were afraid. It's the same with the people who don't touch the politics [now] - "We don't care for politics, we're punks." They probably think it's easier to survive this way. Right, a shit-punk will drink with the nazis, then with somebody else, won't say anything from the stage, and everything's alright. And he'd die next to a ryumochnaya [a type of cheap bar] when he's 45 or 50 and that's it. I don't really care for these people at all. It's a pity that it happens like that in Russia, and I'm trying to show some example, to do something. And lately there have appeared lots of young punks who think with their own heads.

Szarapow: Although you live in Finland, you have a lot - most in fact - of lyrics that deal with Russia, with developments in Russia.

Punch: It's not like that, I'd only lived there for two years. There would be lyrics about Finland, but the stuff that happens in Russia is really bloody full-on. It affects me the most. War in Chechnya is the most important thing. I will keep try-

ing my damnedest, while I can still breathe, until the war is over, I will try to do something about it.

Szarapow: What do you lads think of lyrics of the band being concerned almost exclusively with Russian issues, and none of them really with Finnish realities?

Wisa: I don't think they're all exclusively Russian issues, especially the newest lyrics of Punch are this more general attitude towards humanity or something. Anyway I think the function of the group... It's understandable that Punch has more preoccupations with Russian reality than Finnish.

Szarapow: Why don't you write lyrics yourselves then?

Wisa: Thus far we have thought that it's better that they are sung in Russian, and I think that Punch is pretty good with words, so there's really no need to.

Jere: I don't know what would be the reputation of our band if WE wrote the lyrics in Russian. It could be a disaster!

Punch: We have a plan - some song I can sing of course in English and Finnish too. About Tony Halme - it's a Finnish right-wing politician, he's a bodybuilder and a boxer, very fat and baby-faced. Something between big and baby. This politician has some tattoos and some gold hammer of Thor, and in his back, a little bit [higher than] his arse 'exit only' tattoo.

Wisa: As for lyrics, on "Purgatory" CD there's only one we've done in Finland - it would have been pretty stupid if we tried to include some Finnish issues there because it's a theme album [about] Chechen war and stuff related to that so it's very logical...

Szarapow: So it's like a big rock'n'roll concept album?

Wisa: No, it's DIY punk rock concept album. Or demo. But we'll see what happens in the future.

Jere: Of course [the lyrics are] dealing [with] Russian issues mostly, rather than Finnish issues, but I also think it's quite good that we're doing it in Finland as we're



raising the awareness of Finnish people about Russian problems because even though we are next to this country I think most Finnish people are unaware of Russian politics and situations. I think it's also good for the Finnish to get to know something.

Szarapow: I think you'd also played outside of Finland and Russia, I think in Latvia?

Tuomas: Yeah, once [at Tabuns festival in Kuldiga].

Jere: And we are hoping to do that more in the future.

Szarapow: Which country do you play most often?

Punch: Russia. (laughter)

Wisa: But Latvia was really a strange experience, it was fun playing there but it was quite a big festival. It's a DIY punk festival, one of the best festivals i've ever seen but still it was a festival and that's something I never ever in my life thought I would do. In a way it's nice but it also kinda of feels stupid - "What am I doing here? Why have we ended up here?"

Tuomas: We were the support for DISCHARGE [at Puntala Rock festival in Finland]. Who gives a fuck about the thirty other bands that were there. But I think the response in Latvia was pretty good. Most of the people thought that we were something.

Szarapow: I think one of the reasons was 'cause most of the people could understand the lyrics. I think it was Jere who told me that you intend to record a new album.

Wisa: Yeah we intend. Some new songs which we performed here in St. Petersburg on our gigs now, all-new material, and I guess there won't be much recycled from the old stuff in the future because now we've been writing new stuff and we make new songs. But we don't yet have enough for a CD.

Szarapow: Why did you decide to put out "Purgatory" on CD instead of CDR?

Tuomas: Because we ran out of the CDRs, and releasing a CD is almost the same price [in Russia], it's not that much more expensive - why not do it as well as you can, if it's in the same price range?

Wisa: And because not all of the CDRs seemed to be working and it's very annoying to get feedback or some review for a magazine saying that it looks very promising but unfortunately my copy didn't work, as was the case with some Canadian magazine.

Szarapow: In general, how do you divide the responsibilities within the band?

Tuomas: Wisa and me invent some riffs, and then together at a rehearsal we argue about what is

good and what is not.

Wisa: Sometimes of course there may be some argument but I think we also use quite a bit of this improvisation in the songwriting thing which is really nice. When we do a rehearsal, we play some of our old songs, then Punch takes out the lyrics for some new songs that he has an idea for and he explains a bit what it's about and what feelings would be nice and then we start messing around and usually it's all shit of course but sometimes you find something really nice and then we start to work at that more.

Jere: We don't really have to think about how we're gonna share our responsibilities because it's a collaborative effort anyway. Whoever's got the time and the energy can do what they can. We don't have discussions about that, we do lots of stuff together.

Szarapow: Alexei, can you talk about the contents of new KOLESO DHARMY songs?

Punch: "School Of Men" basically deals with the popular superstition of army being the school of men. We will do hardcore versions of at least some of the songs I've already done acoustically. It's gonna be really full-on. There's also gonna be another song, the lyrics are finished, and we'd started doing it, it's dedicated to [patriotic pop] band LYUBE and [singer

Nikolai] Rastorguyev with his rotten talk of "daddy commander." Of the songs that we've played at Moloko [the album] will include "The Enemy Within". It's influenced by Erich Fromm, his idea of psychoanalysis of people who submit to totalitarianism and authoritative power, how they want to serve and rule at the same time, it's a type of sadomasochism. Wisa has already done "The Enemy Within" t-shirts, he liked the title. And there are some songs that are personal, emotional, for instance, "You Die Today, I'll Die Tomorrow", life-asserting stuff. I've remembered some old songs, I would like to re-record "Legal Fascism", 'cause the recording done [in 1995] was lousy, the sound guy was rotten, some Soviet pop fan - he made the vocals loud and put the guitar to the background, as per usual.

Szarapow: Wisa, can you tell a bit about your artwork? To me it looks a bit like work of Sakevi from GISM, all those collages of violent images...

Wisa: If you're talking about "Purgatory" CD artwork it is of course related to the lyrics, it's not that my main interests in art are schizophrenic and violent, it's very much connected to that project. Now me and Jere are going to take part in this exhibition in Lithuania in the spring [of 2004] so now we're painting for that, I have done some animations and video work as well.

Jere: What I would compare the collages or what I would say you were inspired quite a lot is the artist who makes these for CRASS - Gee Vaucher. I think he has been a bit influenced, in my eyes, I don't know if that's true.

Wisa: But I wouldn't compare... she's somewhere out there. Of course that's true.

Szarapow: What do you do apart from writing songs about war?

Punch: I sing them, then I squarrel with shit-eating punks at punk.ru [forums] about it, I do t-shirts. I've got a concept of turning blatniye tattoos into anti-war, anti-govern-

mental ones. One t-shirt is ready, available through [Epicenter] infoshop. It's a skeleton in a helmet and with a machine gun, holding a scythe that says "anti-terror." It's a real criminal tat, "showing teeth to the authority", but originally it said "Glory to KPSS" on the scythe, so it was cutting people down, likes. But it's modern history now. We need to do at least something. Ah yeah, besides that our song "Ichkeria" will feature on the Old Skool Kids compilation which will be a benefit for Chechen refugees.

Szarapow: Speaking about anti-terror - do you see a critical difference between Bush and Putin?

Punch: There's no really critical difference, there are some other aspects in which they differ, but they both play the same role. They are real imperial leaders with all the corresponding components. Bush has more dough, he's more rich. Putin's more chickenshit.

Szarapow: Are you gonna vote in March [at Presidential elections]?

Punch: Probably not.

Szarapow: Is this a principled decision, is not 'cause you won't be in Volgograd at the time?

Punch: No, it's not that. I won't do it at all. At least that would give me a right not to recognize these people who would be elected presidents etc. For me they are the same people, the same shit. Because if I took part in the elections and somebody was elected, I have to consider them fair. As Diogenes of Sinope said, "If a donkey is elected to serve as a horse, he still won't become a horse."

Szarapow: There's an opinion that personal is political. How do you balance the inner and the outer world? How do these worlds intersect within you?

Punch: Well, they vibrate. Sometimes I'm more self-obsessed, sometimes I'm more...

Szarapow: I mean, as a songwriter.

Punch: Yeah, as a songwriter and as a human being. Sometimes it's



this way, sometimes it's the other, sometimes it's equal. For instance, when we have gigs or some other movement, then you obviously pay more attention to the outer side of life, and then when you're on your own, start to learn something new, read, think, then —. It's the same with everyone.

Szarapow: To which extent is WHEEL OF DHARMA a pacifist band?

Punch: I'm a pacifist.

Szarapow: For you to be pacifist is to be against the war, but you accept violence?

Punch: Anti-militarism. A good question.

Szarapow: Where is the dividing line between pacifism, anti-militarism and violence that you accept on a personal level? 'Cause I think you do accept violence as a method of dealing with nazis, for instance. Some people do not agree with that, I was in Copenhagen last Summer and the band from there, LACK, they were saying from stage that people from Anti-Fascist Action eventually become so obsessed with violence that in a way become like nazis themselves.

Punch: I think beating of nazis is a pacifism. Because of the self-defense. I have no plan to kill nazis. Just kick arse. I like this process. (laughs) It's very funny.

Szarapow: Do you agree with the results of Nuremberg trials? I mean, do you think that the likes of Kaltenbrunner or Goering deserved to be hanged?

Punch: Yes, I think. Although I think it makes no sense, they just died and that's it, they should've done time in prison. It's nothing, a man had died - went to sleep, and it's over. They should've gone to prison, so that people could walk by and look at them - here's a man who is to blame for a few million deaths. And let them look, and let him get frustrated. 'Cause many of them were putting all the blame to Hitler, "We're but a part of the system." These pigs should think of



what the man is, what the system is. It's just fiction, an invention.

Szarapow: Would you condemn somebody in Russia to such a fate? Do you think that there are people who are personally responsible for the things that are happening, for war?

Punch: I think yes, Putin is directly personally responsible. Just like Hitler, it's his personal responsibility. The same with Yeltsin. They are the people who led to this situation. Everything depends on their smallest movement now, that's how they built the "vertical of power," so there's no fucking use denying it. They won't be able to blame it all on their generals then.

Wisa: I think that sometimes when you're dealing with stupid violent fuckheads like neonazis sometimes it's unavoidable and in that regard it's acceptable to use violence in self-defense and stuff like that but I hate violence myself, and I would never kill anybody, and I didn't go to army, and I regard myself as a pacifist.

Szarapow: Do you get a lot of neonazi violence in Tampere?

Wisa: No, not really. But lately there've been some sightings. In my hometown where I lived in my youth there was this big nazi problem.

Szarapow: Was it a place like

Joensuu?

Wisa: Yes. Exactly. (laughter) So I found out you can't deal with these guys peacefully except by running away but you can't do that every time. [Violence] is not something that I glorify, it will never solve anything anyway.

Szarapow: I think Punch has been glorifying all this stuff, [martial arts] etc. Before one of the gigs in Volgograd he went out with his mate and they were showing all of this fighting stuff...

Punch: Was that when I was breaking something over my head? There were lots of things written in "Pulya" [Punch's old punk bulletin]...

Wisa: I think martial arts is a different issue, it's not about violence.

Punch: There might've been some kind of a joke, I don't remember. It's fun, it's lots of fun.

Jere: Although I like the lyrics of WHEEL OF DHARMA very much and I agree with Punch on most points I think that sometimes he can go a bit too far with these things but that's life, you have to deal with different persons, and also I think a band shouldn't be... It's a collective of people and...

Szarapow: ...not the same people, cloned four times.

Jere: Yeah, yeah.

Wisa: If I had to play in a band with

myself cloned four times I would kill myself four times.

Tuomas: I strongly agree with Wisa about the violence thing. I think the same way because usually I try to run away...

Szarapow: There is this Welsh pop band MANIC STREET PREACHERS, they have a line in one of their songs ["If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next"] that goes like "if I can shoot rabbits then I can shoot fascists... and if you tolerate this then your children will be next"...

Punch: Sometimes fascism is like a mental illness, maybe you need a doctor to explain the reasons of their fascism, some psychoanalysis.

Szarapow: What can be such a doctor? Besides violence?

Punch: Thinking! (laughter)

Wisa: Communication with people.

Punch: Such things happened. I read Erich Fromm books, it's very...

Wisa: He's slowly turning into a hippy. (laughter) Don't worry, there's still some work to be done.

Szarapow: One of the things this lyric I'd quoted has been suggesting is, in my understanding, violence against other beings leads to violence against human beings. I don't necessarily agree with that but it's the same pattern of thought - if you're superior to animals then you are superior to other human beings. Does anyone of you agree or disagree with that?

Wisa: I understood this slogan a bit differently, I thought it was sort of [about] putting the fascists in their place...

Szarapow: "And if you tolerate this then your children will be next."

Wisa: Well, there are other ways of dealing with things you can't tolerate than killing everybody so of course it shouldn't be tolerated.

Jere: As for other ways of dealing with nazis than violence - of course sometimes it's necessary, there are situations when you can't avoid violence, it's life, but it all connects to bigger issues - how the whole society should be built and if we could

work out a way to build a more humane society as a whole then...

Just to offer people other options to have meaningful lives, apart from being out in the streets, being violent idiots. It's not just a question of how to deal with one person, it's a big question that connects to lots of other.

Szarapow: So maybe learning martial arts will make the fascists less violent.

Jere: Could be, yeah, it depends on the martial arts, the guru...

Wisa: ...the environment...

Jere: But I don't recommend starting martial arts schools for fascists.

Punch: Well, I think that really they exaggerate. Really exaggerate.

Szarapow: It's a poetic method.

Punch: Yeah, it's a hyperbole.

Zhenya: It's made up bollocks.

Punch: See, if I jump a fascist I do it understanding that he is scum that will kill and not give a fuck, he'd kill a child, kill whoever. He's got a finished concept of why's and how's, for what reason and which child, exactly 'cause [the child] is of such nationality. I am defending at this moment, I'm not propagating any violence. I can talk to [fascists]... I really remember in Moscow metro how I was running after those nazis with a knife, in the carriage they were violently beating this Caucasian guy, kicking him on the floor... There are photos, by the way.

Szarapow: What do you think of the use of antifascist history to patriotic ends - like, we were fighting fascists in Hitler times and now we're fighting the terrorists in Chechnya.

Punch: This is imperial bollocks. They don't treat Hitler as a fascist, they treat them as Germans, as aliens. Whether that's fascists, or capitalists, or communists, or whoever - it's "them", it's the enemies. For them fascism is just a word.

Szarapow: Why didn't Finland, which also took part in the siege of Leningrad etc., get the honour of being an enemy?

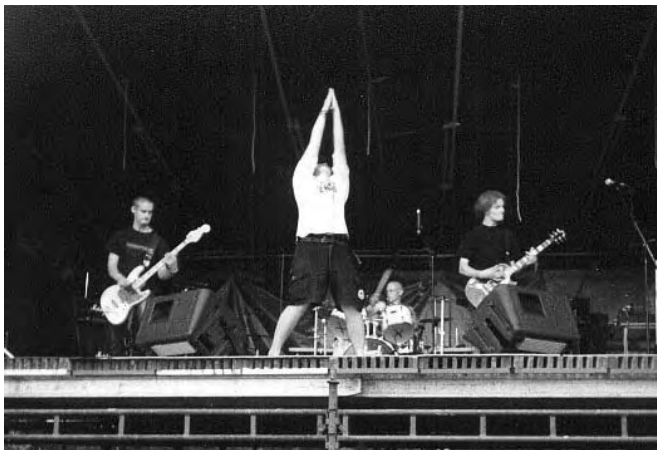
Punch: It's 'cause they quit the war as soon as it became clear that Hitler's going to lose it, and they made an arrangement with Stalin. They'd never have become [Hitler's] ally but Stalin fucked it up himself. Russia attacked Finland, then they had no allies, America or Europe didn't help them, they were on their own, that's why they got together with Hitler. But they weren't really doing much, nothing outrageous.

Szarapow: What do you think about "Russia Bombs Finland", the Propaganda Records compilation?

Wisa: It's a great compilation, I think everybody should get it. Well, I don't take [the title] too literally.

Szarapow: Well, we once did.

Contact: punch1974@mail.ru



REFUSE

“356-0-356” tape (Monopolka / Stauropygial)

Pretty much a collaboration between people from Monopolka and Stauropygial, recorded live via a phone line with a newly invented noise tool. It's got weird electronic-sounding noises, wall-of-sound shite, lots of teeth gnashing (very loud and scary), heavily distorted mouth-organ, toys (of course) etc. Extra comic effects can be achieved if you speak Russian, from like hearing Fil (Monopolka) trying to persuade Roma (Stauropygial) to sing a song about cunt.

ABDUKTIO / THE DIVISIVE split CDR (NEKAC Distribucija: Rumbas 6-12, Kuldīga LV3300, Latvia | delamuit niex@yahoo.com | www.nekac.lv)

A fairly nice split CD with two Finnish bands. ABDUKTIO kick it off with 8 songs of metallically modern hardcore (not metalcore, mind you). They're good but not perfectly my cup of tea. THE DIVISIVE (13 songs) are doing the melodic old school thing that pretty much leaves me cold as it borders on pop punk quite a bit. One remarkable thing is that they seem to use acoustic guitar at times. Both bands are quality but I'm not into them for some reason. I didn't get a lyric sheet, so the only comment I have on lyrics is that ABDUKTIO seem to mostly sing in Finnish, whereas THE DIVISIVE cling to English by most part. I wonder whose face graces the cover?

ABERRANT “14 Tracks Of Brutal Grind” tape (Niesperas: www.niesperas.narod.ru | greencycle@narod.ru) Just as release title says, brutal grindcore here, all the way from Colorado, USA. The cassette includes stuff released (on a split 7" with UNHOLY GRAVE among other sources) and unreleased. Quality studio sound. ABERRANT aren't too metal, quite fast, and at times crust-influenced, so I give them my vote. Full-colour cover includes full lyrics, at times a bit full-on but quite well-written. “Caught In Shane Embury's Dream” has lyrics “written entirely from titles of NAPALM DEATH songs from the first two albums” and has to be read to be believed!

ABNORMI “Avunhuuto” EP (If Society: www.ifsociety.com)

Finland seems to have an unlimited supply of great hardcore punk bands. ABNORMI are one of them; they play mid-tempo to fast relentless and slightly melodic hardcore. The sound is great, blown-out and raw. The lyrics are in Finnish, with short English explanations

provided, and these explanations are nice, mostly covering social issues. The cover is quite crap though.

AK47 / NOVEMBER 13TH split EP (Disyouth / Oi Free Youth / Wolf Im Schafspelz: Nils Casper, Judenstr. 35, 37073, Göttingen, Germany | n.i.l.l.e@gmx.net)

Split record with a band from Croatia and another one from Germany. AK47, from Zagreb, are doing one long song of epic melodic crust here (sung in Serbocroatian). Good lyrics, and the song is great. South Germany's NOVEMBER 13TH are almost an afterthought in comparison, but their metallically / gloomy punk of the TRAGEDY school is quite good nonetheless. Lyrics in English and German. Worth it for both sides, but AK47 win.

ANKYLYM “Instrumenty” tape (Stauropygial: Roman Pavlov, PO Box 429, St. Petersburg, 191123, Russia | www.stauropygial.spb.ru)

Quite weird, and slightly funky at quite a few times, alternative rock / punk / ska mix, made even more freaky by elements of Asian / Arctic music, throat singing, Jew's harp almost throughout, along with horns, partly self-invented. The lyrics are dorky as hell, covering philosophy, ecology, political science etc. - two songs are dedicated to an overview of Thomas Hobbes' ideas on the nature of the state. At least a couple of tracks are multi-lingual (Russian, French, German, Spanish, English are among languages used). As a bonus, the tape includes an acoustic track that's more representative of ANKYLYM as it is now.

“Anticomfort” comp. tape (Defectapes: Alexander Vasilenko, Shkolnaya 7, Lomovichi, Otkjabrskiy r-n, Gomelskaya obl., 247302, Belarus) Great international hardcore punk compilation - classic type. Handwriting + cut + paste = cover and booklet. Bands featured are mostly of the crusty hardcore variety - largely East European stuff (Belarus, Ukraine, Croatia, etc.), but some well-known international bands - DROPDEAD, TOTALITAR, ARTIMUS PYLE, etc. - are tossed in as well. All bands have 2 or 3 songs which does help to get an understanding of their sound and ideas. The compilation's varied (noise, melodic punk, grind are the included deviations from “Anticomfort”'s general direction) yet consistent. Highly recommended!

APPENDIX “Money Is Not My Currency” LP (Hohnie: Andreas Hohn, An Der Kuhranke 7, 31535 Neustadt, Ger-

many | www.hoehnierecords.de) Classic Finnish punk rock on this one. The LP combines material from “Huora 7” and “Ei Raha Oo Mun Valuutta” 12”, both from 1983 and both on Propaganda Records originally - mark of quality! Moderately melodic, not over-the-top raw yet undeniably powerful mid-tempo (by contemporary standards) punk rock. The rather uneventful insert has a couple of band pics and the lyrics for title track in Finnish and English. An alright reissue of great material.

ARSYKE / KAUNIIT POLIISIT split EP (Pitaa Ny Kaunia)

These two Finnish bands have not only shared this seven inch, covered each other's songs, but apparently co-released it too. Quite traditional punky punk stuff; ARSYKE (www.hullunihmi.sentausti.cjb.net) feature a female screacher, while the boy-fronted KP (www.kauniitpoliisit.cjb.net) are slightly more melodic. The lyrics are as Finnish as the bands' names.

ATTITUDE PROBLEM №34 zine (PO Box 326, Leeds, LS7 3YR, England | theveganwarrior@yahoo.com) in English

One of the best zines I've read lately - fairly simple recipe (interviews, reviews, rants) yet the passion that came into this tasteful project cannot be denied. The design is in classic cut and paste style, with everything written by hand - and very nicely so. Steve vents his feelings relating to animal rights in general and fur in particular, and to the war in Iraq. The reviews are to the point, and cover some records and some zines. It's the interviews that are the best (and biggest) part of the zine. SEVERED HEAD OF STATE, BORN / DEAD, PILGER and URO all give lengthy answers to thought-out questions relating to the band members' outlook on life, political views and such. URO's 8-page interview was especially amazing.

AVSKUM “Punkista” CD (Prank: PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, USA | www.prankrecords.com) New album by this long-running Swedish punk band. Musically, they deliver the goods in the basic crusty discore style, good heavy recording (I liked one of the cymbal sounds), great throaty vocals, a few guitar solos but not too many (it's punk discore not metal discore), the whole works. On the one hand the CD is just under 27 minutes, but on the other it's 15 songs so it's pretty much a full-length. The lyrics are in Swedish (5 songs) and English

(do the math); English ones are quite basic political stuff (sample song titles: "Fight Back Capitalism", "Fight Back Racism", "United States Of War", "The Children Of War" - gimme a break) and Swedish are beyond my understanding. Tape version of the album is out on Defectapes.

BATHTUB SHITTER "Fertilizer" EP (First Blood Family: www.firstbloodfamily.com)

Punky grindcore from Osaka, Japan, recorded in 1999. The song structures are kept simple and straightforward, sound raw (the two live tracks are as airtight as the studio material), the vocals are of the usual grunting pig / squealing pig variety. Nice outro. The lyrics are all about crap. Not my cup of sake, thank you, but the layout is nice. **BLACK COBRA CD** (self-released: www.blackcobra.net)

3 tracks in 6 minutes by this American duo (members of CAVITY and 16), playing sludgy, techy, metally downtuned punk. No lyrics provided, but there is a barcode printed on the back of the CD. The band is good, especially for a two-piece, but what's the point in 6-minute CDs? It's really good, but I wanna hear more, and I wanna know what it's all about.

BOLESNO GRINJE / SODN' DAN split LP (Humanita Nova)

Great split record with two crusty hardcore bands from former Yugoslavia - SODN' DAN (sodndan@email.si) are from Slovenia and BOLESNO GRINJE are from Croatia. Both sing in their respective mother tongues, but SODN' DAN also provide translations in English, and their lyrics are political in nature. They are somewhat more discore-influenced of the two, and therefore maybe a bit closer to my heart, but BOLESNO GRINJE are good too.

CALL ME LORETTA "Crosswind" CD (Dead Bees: www.deadbees.com)

French indie band that strongly reminds one of SONIC YOUTH. I mean, really, except all songs sound fronted by Kim Gordon and there are no epic guitar wankathons, so all in all this is an improvement over actual SONIC YOUTH. The booklet has nice drawings but lyrics are not represented which a doh because the paragraph or so in the insert is very nice writing. I'd fancy reading more. (Turns out, there IS more on the band's website, and the text on the insert is a collage made up of lines of the songs).

CAPTAIN EVERYTHING! / DIVIT / BELVEDERE "Live At The Camden Underworld 31/01/2004" split DVD (Punkervision: www.punkervision.net) A split DVD ft. England's CAPTAIN EVERYTHING!, America's DIVIT and Canada's BELVEDERE. All were filmed during a gig in London, all have decent sound quality (though the kick drum

kind of sounds weird), and good visuals - multi-camera shots, some band, some crowd. CAPTAIN EVERYTHING! frantically play speedy pop punk, and are the most fun to watch of the bunch. They look like right nutters, and act it too! DIVIT have all those dramatic guitar in the air moves and stuff but it sorta looks standard. They're not saying anything particularly funny really, and the music's mid-tempo emo rock, bordering on just plain mainstream guitar pop. Although the bit where the singer put the guitar behind his back and played a solo this way was quite a nice touch. BELVEDERE jump about quite a bit, and musically they're quite alright - can be described as very melodic hardcore. As far as facial hair goes, CAPTAIN EVERYTHING! members display it most prominently, and it does look cool - almost Lemmy-cool. DIVIT have some but it's mostly standard goatees, nothing that would make you turn your head (except maybe away). BELVEDERE are even worse - the only thing worth a mention (and a negative one at that) is their drummer's moustache. C'mon! All in all, the DVD was a nice thing to watch before going to sleep. Might've felt better if I could dance on my bed but the only kind of dancing available was dancing with myself and I prefer a different kind of video for that kind of activity.

CHANGES "Alone" CD (Old Skool Kids Records: Sergei Voloshin, PO Box 64, Moscow, 109147, Russia | oldschoolkids@yahoo.com | www.oskrecords.com)

Debut MCD by Moscow's melodic old school hardcore band CHANGES. The bands this is most commonly compared with include ENDSTAND and AMULET. The songs are quite fine, and the dual guitars rock and roar. The band is really quite good but not much of their goodness translates well onto recording - the drums sound weird, the vocals are muffled. The lyrics deal mainly with personal empowerment. Doh.

THE COLLYWOBBLES "Excellent Barfighters" CD (Deadlock: PO Box 324, 7900 AH Hoogeveen, Holland | www.deadlock.nl)

"Real men, real rock 'n' roll!" says the CD insert. The lyrics (in English, judging by song titles) are not provided. Competently played, not entirely devoid of energy but fairly uneventful punkish rawk by these Dutch dudes. Decent enough soundtrack to getting drunk, but as a home listening?

CONFLICT "Carlo Giuliani" AVCD (Mortarhate Records: PO Box 448, Eitham, London SE9 2QS, England | www.conflict-uk.com)

Recent single by UK anarcho punk vets. First two tracks of the disc my CD player interprets as screechy noise that quite reminds of ZX Spectrum pro-

grams. The thing is, this is actually an AVCD (apparently, England's first release in this format), and first two tracks feature a video for the title track (in two different formats). It lasts the whole of five minutes but it's far from boring, the editing is very dynamic. Concert footage of the band is intertwined with political newscasts. London, Genoa, Gothenburg, Prague, Seattle: cops stepping back under hail of stones, people in colourful costumes dancing in the streets freed from the cars, McDonald's windows smashed by the crowd throwing cobble-stones, police cars set on fire, body of Carlo Giuliani, a participant in anticapitalist, "antiglobalisation" demonstration who was killed by a carabinieri in Genoa. CONFLICT's song is not the first to be dedicated to Giuliani's memory; PETROGRAD from Luxembourg and LOS FASTIDIOS from Italy sing about him already. The Brits have included his death in the context of the fight of capitalists and states with any and all protest: "Should we fight with fists when / They use guns, planes, bombs and tanks? / Do we plead then beg forgiveness / As their concrete paves our way / As they chop down our Sherwood Forest / Their bullets murder love with hate? / Do we forgive and forget those terrorist whores? Do they bollocks! Come on! War!" The song doesn't bother with a chorus yet it keeps the tension constant; agonizing pause mid-song, and an explosion before the last verse: "Make sure the more they kill, the stronger our will". Besides the title track the single includes a song called "A Gaping Hole." It's written in trademark CONFLICT style, driving, energetic punk rock, without choruses, with several intertwined vocal lines. The lyrics are all sentences starting with the same letter: "Nuclear nightmare nearing now. No! Never! Organized opposition opposing oppression. Overthrow! Overcome oblivion!", A to Z.

CONFUSE "Old God Meet New God" LP (Absolute Power: no address)

No address means a bootleg, and Absolute Power means a well-done one. The LP is pressed on extremely thick vinyl and contains two rare recordings by noisy hardcore masters of Kyushu, Japan, - CONFUSE. Side one has their "Indignation" demo from April 1984 and side two is a live set from December of the same year... The year when they were perhaps at their noisiest and thus best. The booklet compiles all the information related to the recordings contained herein and provides the complete discography of this weird and wonderful band. Three cheers for Absolute Power!

COURTIS & THE SOVIET SEX MACHINES (Monopolka)

Split tape featuring Monopolka's main-

stays SOVIET SEX MACHINES' live set from August 2004 - mostly it's the usual wall of harsh noise with weird-arse sounds coming through - toys, musical instruments, something that sounds like a chainsaw, samples and such. Even a lecture about circus clowns. They yell a lot, too. COURTIS is from Argentina. At first it sounds like someone eating (using delay and distortion pedals instead of knives and forks), and then like someone flushing a toilet with delay and distortion pedal, and then like someone taking off on a jet plane or a space rocket. Then suddenly he meets up with god (some slightly distorted organ parts make me think that). Something weird happens then for the remainder of the cassette (I can't be arsed thinking up wacky metaphors any longer, sorry). SOVIET SEX MACHINES definitely win out by punk points.

DAMAGE DEPOSIT "Straight To The Bottom" EP (Havoc)

Second - and last - EP by Minneapolis' hardcore ragers. The sound is more rough, less polished than on their debut 7" "Do Damage" (which, apparently, are the words that Fred Durst said to the crowd at Woodstock '99). The music is still mostly influenced by youth crew hardcore, and has all the things that make it work - sing-alongs, breakdowns, thrash parts, sarcastic lyrics... Not so sure about the last point though - where the fuck is the lyric sheet? Well alright. Amazing black and silver artwork. Oh yeah, colour vinyl, though my copy of the record looked more soiled than coloured!

DAMN DIRTY APES CD (self-released: www.damndirtyapes.co.uk)

Fairly strange punkish rock from Birmingham, England. Lots of electronic noises inbetween the rocking bits, and weirdly muted vocals complete the picture. I'd say alternative rock (maybe a bit less structured WILDHEARTS) but I wouldn't say it sucks. It's just nothing special. No lyrics provided with this 3-song CD. The 4th track is a spoken-word appeal to book the band which then turns into wacky sound collage thing.

DAYMARE EP (Ratbone / Stonehenge: BP 46, 33031 Bordeaux Cedex, France | www.stonehengerecords.com)

D-beat hardcore from France, but slightly more melodic and dark than just discore (thus somewhat in line with FROM ASHES RISE and such), raw sound. Social / personal lyrics, translated into English and Spanish on the insert. Great artwork.

DEEP TURTLE "Turkele" CD (Zerga: www.deepturtle.net)

Finnish rock with organ and vocals in Spanish - I think, song titles are "Perdido", "Pesadilla" etc. but no lyrics are included. Sounds like a Steve Albini-

produced circus band, weird and angular and noisy (but not too noisy) and fucked-up (but in a controlled kind of way). Looks pretty nice but doesn't rock my socks off.

DENY LIFE "Soundtrack To A Mass Riot" CDR (Guillot Pierre, 10 rue Francois Couperin, 78590 Noisy-le-Roi, France | guillotpierre@hotmail.com)

Like many Parisian bands, DENY LIFE play heavy, moshy hardcore, in their case somewhere between metalcore and grind, with occasional sludge bit or two. The recording is really good, and the band is tight on both their NYHC-type bits and their blastbeat fits. However, this 6-song demo lacks lyrics; half the song titles are in French and half in English.

DIRTY DOGS "Petualang" CD (Broken Noise: Norhafizi (Jimbo), No. 12, JL Lembah 24, TMN Desa Jaya, Johor Bahru, 81100, Johor, Malaysia | www.diy-noise.tripod.com)

This took, like, three years to record. Does it mean it's a masterpiece? Unfortunately, the answer is no, not really. It's just rough punk / hardcore with electronic drums and growling vocals. While this is an improvement over chaos punk of THE DIRTY DOGS' early recordings, it's still somewhat primitive in songwriting and unappealing in sound. Some of the guitar leads are positively cheesy. The booklet includes lyrics in Malay, and a short history of the band formed by three brothers in Kuala Lipis in 1993. Last track is a ROCKERS cover.

DISCIDER "Drinking To Forget The Future" EP (First Blood Fantasy)

Fairly primitive crust fare here, on first EP by this American punk band. Very simple rhythm and ugly vocals - all four members do 'em. It's inventive in places and it's got potential but it's just not there yet. Decent political lyrics. Clear vinyl, nice and simple layout. F.B.F. has some better releases to offer.

DISFACE / KOBAYASHI split EP (Oi Free Youth / Tofu Guerrilla / Falling Down / Moskito / Alerta Antifascista / Grita O Muere / Behind The Scenes / Faul / Disyouth: Postfach 120811, 68059 Mannheim, Germany | disyouth@web.de)

One of those irritating EPs that have sides played at different speed. Released by a variety of German labels (with one from Spain), the EP features two seriously rocking melodic punk bands. DISFACE from Spain, despite the name, are a strong pop punk band with great, almost operatic female vocals. Pretty good lyrics (in Spanish) with a political bent. KOBAYASHI ("zee" German band) here quite remind of PETROGRAD, well, the lyrics (in German) are quite political as well. Full-colour cover.

DISFUNKTSIYA "Korporativnaya Popsnya" tape (Dysfunction: www.dysfunction.pesni.ru | dysfunction@mail.ru)

Quite lively punk rock here from Moscow - a bit more energy than on their debut three-song CDR (all tracks off which are re-recorded herein). It's definitely eighties-influenced, classic punk, maybe the guitar would've better been overdubbed - the sound is a tad too spare on guitar solo bits. The lyrics (in Russian) appear to be good (DISFUNKTSIYA singer and guitarist Vladimir Kozlov is a published writer with a couple of novels to his credit) but aren't printed on the cover; with the vocals quite high in the mix the words are easy to comprehend though. One of the songs is a Russian-language version of "Pull My Strings" by DEAD KENNEDYS.

DISTRESS "Fuck The System / Propaganda" CDR (via Total Punk)

Brutal Russian discore - this CD has two of their demos put together (7 songs, 11 minutes). Relentlessly powerful noisy sound with hoarse screaming of Sasha "Malysk" on top; the lyrics, which are translated into English on the insert, criticize conformism and violence - quite typical of the genre. One of the songs is an ANTI CIMEX cover. Well-done CD by one of the best punk bands in St. Petersburg currently.

DOGPRINTS №4 zine (Yellow Dog, PO Box 550208, 10372, Berlin, Germany | www.yellowdog.de) in English

Free zine that is published by Yellow Dog Records. Last few pages are taken over by their catalogue, and there's a few ads in here. However, most of the zine is band interviews - WOLFBRI-GADE, SELFISH, SAYYADINA, SNOWBLOOD and several more. Fairly nice, for a freebie even more so.

DONA MALDAD "Y El Estado Hipocrita Continua Asesinando" LP (Alerta Antifascista / Les Nains Aussi: Nicolas Retiere, 1 rue Edgar Quinet, 38000 Grenoble, France | les_nains_aus_si@libertysurf.fr)

There are people whose general attitude to melodic punk is rejection or at least mistrust, and I'm one of those. But this time I cannot resist. DONA MALDAD have the frantic energy of pogo-punk, apparently without the usual associated brainlessness - the Spanish lyrics appear to be of political / anticapitalist variety. Venezuela's the next big thing, I tell you that.

DUFUS "Neuborns" CD (Iron Man: PO Box 9121, Birmingham, B13 8AU, England | www.ironmanrecords.co.uk) Arty indie stuff from New York that kind of goes nowhere, balancing between folk and alternative rock influences. It's consciously trying to be weird but just strikes me as very, very

pretentious and thus quite crap. And I hate the guy's alternarock™ vocals. I'm not at all surprised that it sat unreleased from 2001. Lyrics included for just one song (but a four-page press release went with my copy). Some acoustic stuff as bonus tracks.

EPIDEMIA tape (Nothing Special: guloquum@ten.pl)

This tape, a benefit for "Abolishing The Borders From Below" zine, features the entire recorded output (aka a demo) of Berlin's international band EPIDEMIA - which featured four Poles and Saira from US band DETESTATION. The band was playing crusty hardcore punk that's totally raging and relentless. The drumming is fucking amazing! And Saira's vocals aren't too shabby either. The lyrics, presented in Polish and German (along with information on the band and the beneficiary), are of political nature. It kinda reminds of an older Berlin squatter band, NKD.

EXHALE / SKITKIDS split EP (Putrid Filth Conspiracy: Box 7092, 20042 Malmo, Sweden | www.putridfilth.com) All split seven inch records are an evil waste. They include too little music, and require too much resources. Even if one of the bands is good the other tends to seem shite in comparison, and there's not enough of good stuff anyway. I know all of that perfectly well yet still I can't bloody resist. EXHALE from Japan play noisy, rocking and powerful traditional Japanese hardcore (the type that has guitar solos), while Danish / Swedish SKITKIDS are just fucking crushing. The stuff I understood on the insert includes a few lines of EXHALE lyrics (the rest in Japanese), and comments to SKITKIDS songs (the words themselves are in SweDISH). Rounded out by a nice cover.

FAK'FOOD №1 zine (klown@rambler.ru) in Russian

First issue of a new zine from Irkutsk, East Siberia. Fairly standard content-wise, columns and interviews form the bulk of the zine along with articles on vivisection in Irkutsk medical schools and followers of Leo Tolstoy's anarchist teaching. Interviewed are PLYUSCHI, TARAKANY!, COSIA RUIIM, INFECT, PET NIHIL and KAFKA, most of the columns have a sociopolitical nature and the zine's rounded out with a St. Petersburg scene report.

FILTHPACT CDR (demo: Dave Rowlands, 19 Albany Place, Aberdeen, AB11 6TQ, Scotland | www.filthpact.com)

Self-described as "crust violence", this new Scottish band rocks the fucking house. Just six tracks on this one, and the first of them, "The Watering Down Of Hardcore", is a spoken-word affair, with the text written by Chris Bickel (MRR / GUYANA PUNCH LINE), but

otherwise strongly reminiscent of the opening cut on OI POLLOI's "Fuim Catha" LP. The songs are strong, short and brutal, the band tight, with boy vocals that sound either inhuman or tortured, well, maybe the sound is slightly tinny. The lyrics cover scene issues (including Christian hardcore bollocks), and relationships between man and the rest of nature (not very favourably for the man, too). Even the insert's nice AND readable.

FUN "Szkłarska Poreba LP" CD (If Society)

Rejoice all of you (us) SHELLAC and FUGAZI fans! FUN, from Finland, comes your (our) way, and it's neither good (it's quite bad-arse in fact) nor clean (it's distorted and ugly). The CD is a bit of an improvement over their debut ten-inch, though mostly it's the sound quality. The band is much, much tighter than a nun's cunt, is quite bloody inventive, and has the hooks down. The lyrics are in English, and try as they might they aren't shocking to anyone except said nun perhaps. Good art though.

GRUPA VILNIS "Man Ir Amurs" (Brkuls Prod.: egdarsb@lanet.lv)

Kuldiga, Latvia's instrumentalists GRUPA VILNIS ("group wave") are also known as GRU.VI. - a fitting abbreviation, as groovy they indeed are. The very minimalist lineup of just bass and drums brings to mind SABOT, but GRU.VI. do not simply play like a rhythm section without the rest of the band, no, they are inventive, jazzy, freaky and, yes, groovy. It kind of reminds of the later, jazzy stuff that the bassist's old band VONOSONOLLOPPUS played. The sound is surprisingly full - with many an effect distorting the sound of Edzs' bass guitar, and Spanis' drums occasionally sounding as if played by someone with 3 or 4 hands. This CD is a compilation of live recordings done over a few years in a few places, but the quality is quite good. I am not so sure how well GRUPA VILNIS might've played without feeding back from the audience. One track features guest screeching by INOKENTIJS MARPLS frontman Dambis.

HACKELSTORM / LAPSHA BYSTROGO PRIGOTOVLENIYA split tape (via Stauropygial)

Tape's packed in a bag from instant noodles: LAPSHA BYSTROGO PRIGOTOVLENIYA, one of Stauropygial Records' many noise projects (using distorted guitars by most part, with sludgy ambient noise results), is named after Russian expression meaning this type of meal. HACKELSTORM, an ANKLYM side project, play poppy instrumental music with bass or guitar (depending on the track), synth and drum machine. Unfortunately, their brilliant version of Russian folk tune "Yabloch-

ko" (a contribution to "Twinkle Stars And Lullabys" compilation) is not included.

HARUM-SCARUM "The Last Light" LP (Partners In Crime: PO Box 11787, Portland, OR 97211, USA)

The final record by these gringa anarcho-punks. A lot more melodic compared to their early stuff, and thus slightly less their own, though powerful and driving anyway. The lyrics are mostly political - war, violence, government - but sometimes this bleak outlook is extrapolated on the inner world: "Electric chair or laziness. It's all systemic." Brill.

HERO DISHONEST "Climbing Up On The Way Down" EP (If Society / Drugs Kill Your Mind / Enslaved / Myrsky Market / Crime Scene: Box 13, 83 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB, England | crimescene@blueyonder.co.uk) Killer raw hardcore from Finland, with dual vocals. Has some melodic elements, and what some people would term "sick breakdowns", but is much better, and no less powerful than these descriptions might lead you to believe. "Deadline Twist" even has some experimental rock elements. Great lyrics (in English): sharp, witty, sarcastic and heart-felt.

HOSENFEFER "Knife In My Back" EP (Tian An Men 89: Antipodes Souterains, 28 Rue De Soultz, 67100 Strasbourg, France | www.geocities.com/tam89rds)

Tight punk rock and roll from Kosovo, lyrics in English. Good recording, good cover, but I am kind of unimpressed. No lyrics on the insert.

HUMANEATERS / THE MALCHIKI "With Incredible Sound Of Their Deep Dark And Wet Wet Grave" split tape (Nov'yo: robot@lenta.ru)

Two garage-sounding projects from St. Petersburg (or Tosno, or Turukhtannie Islands in the Gulf of Finland, or whatever). The music (hardcore and melodic punk for HUMANEATERS, garage punk covers for MALCHIKI) sounds rough, the vocals are even rougher and it's quite impossible to make much lyrics out. Weirdness all around. The cover envelope, conveniently enough, only features pictures and band names. For what sounds like a one-off both bands are very lively and competent.

IN.STORA "How Come You Don't Get Bored Of All The Happy Ends On Screen?" CD (Kablo Muzika: Kestas K., PO Box 3041, 2026 Vilnius, Lithuania | www.kablys.hardcore.lt)

Excellent contemporary hardcore from Latvia. It's sort of tech-y, somewhat metally, more than a wee bit emotional - in short, it's got a bunch of different influences. However, it doesn't make the thing eclectic, neither it's all blended together. IN.STORA takes the various elements and makes them their own, so even when they hit a reggae streak

(on "Another Typical Antiwar Song") they still give it a sound of their own. There's a lot of stuff packed in here - lots of noises mixed in with the music (a must-have for arty emometalcore bands), lengthy English lyrics in the booklet touching on politics and non-conformism, four videos and a few dozen pictures in the multimedia part. **IN.STORA "Miasma"** CD (Old Skool Kids)

Latvia's IN.STORA have released their new album on Moscow's Old Skool Kids label. That's the most remarkable change - they kept the hyper-technical emometalcore style of theirs. There are just eight tracks on this CD but each has enough musical ideas, melodies, themes for two or three normal songs. Math-metal bits are intertwined with the more elegiac pieces - mid-album we encounter a track that's played on piano and violin. The chaos is always near, and the band is scared, but they playing is so tight that they keep on the edge of the abyss. Everything's under control! Don't panic! Kaspars' lyrics are predictably lengthy and complicated, in English and Latvian. He seems to be screaming largely about the ways that the consumerist society is influencing people who live within it. Who are breathing in its miasma.

INVARIANT №2 zine (PO Box 149, Almaty, 480000, Kazakhstan | www.almaty-liberta.boom.ru) in Russian It's the only theoretical libertarian zine I know from Middle Asia. This 40-page issue contains just one in-depth essay that covers the relationships between the proletariat and the work, and not a single picture. Now that's brave. The text first looks at the way that workers behaved in revolutions and strikes throughout the history of capitalism, and then provides the methodological observations, with one of the conclusions being that "the fundamental contradiction of our society (proletariat - capital) is only potentially deadly for capitalism if the worker confronts his work, that is not only the capitalist but what the capital makes of him." I quite like the analysis employed here - sort of reminds me of "Lefty" Hoologan columns in MRR.

JACK "To Hungary With Love" tape (Defect Apes) Powerful, fast and tight thrashy hardcore from Hungary here. Crust and grind influences are well present. Sometimes it is metallic in a good way, that is, metal sound but not metal song structures. The lyrics - translated into English and hand-written - are excellent, repeatedly pointing to consumerism and capitalism as the roots of all evil - such as media manipulations, fur industry, and wars. The tape's closed with an electronic remix of one of the tracks.

THE KILLING SPREE EP (Rimbaud: www.rimbaudrecords.com) Mostly instrumental (vocals only on the first track, and there's not an arseload of 'em) band from North Ireland, musically somewhere between noiserock and post hardcore, powerful and inventive. No lyrics but a nice screen-printed cover nevertheless. Limited to (I think) 500 copies.

KOBAYASHI "Disko" LP (Falling Down / Moskito / Malinke / Alerta Antifascista: PO Box 2318, 24913 Flensburg, Germany | cruste@no-pasaran.org | www.no-pasaran.org)

This is "zee" German KOBAYASHI, not the great, late Austrian band of the same seemingly non-generic name. "Zee" German KOBAYASHI is playing melodic punk with political lyrics in various languages. A bruise or two instead of smoking ruins - guys, it's like calling your band DISCHARGE and playing weak metal. Huh. Nice record though, thick booklet 'n' all that.

KOMATOZ "Nenavist" tape (Total Punk: Alexandr Yakovlev, PO Box 127, St. Petersburg, 192171, Russia | totalpunk@hotmail.ru)

This is a full-length cassette album by St. Petersburg punk band manned mostly by the same people that play in DISTRESS. Musically it's not very far apart, kind of similar to early EXPLOITED / GBH / DISCHARGE although at times some bits remind of old school hardcore (the intro to "Cops" might've fit well on a GORILLA BISCUITS album except it didn't). Vocals are of the screamed variety, dealing with cops, wars, beers and Britney Spears, not always exactly in a PC fashion though. The cover is full-colour, with lots of picturesque punks (including the band members) featured. No lyrics printed though.

LAMANT "Pizdets" CDR (self-released: Igor Konik, PO Box 205, Minsk, 220107, Belarus | konyk@land.ru)

Fast, relentless thrashy hardcore from Minsk, with former members of HATE TO STATE and SELFSHIT. Some jazzy bits in a couple of places but with the raw sound that the recording, originally meant as a demo, has it's got just the right amount of experimentation, without overt artiness. Great sarcastic / surrealist lyrics in Russian and Belarussian. Covers of songs by DOOM (English band) and CHIMERA. The CD is housed in a great cardboard cover that's done very inventively, and includes great fucking graphics. Highly recommended.

LAST UNDER THE SUN "Windfall" CD (Iron Man Records)

Somewhat this record took a few years to materialize - recorded in 2001, mixed in 2003, it was only released in 2004. But this is precisely a case of better late than never - while the band obvi-

ously explores the quite populated LEATHERFACE / HUSKER DU territory of melodic punk, they do it well. The vocals, though, are not as harsh and strong, but the songs are not ruined by the execution. The intro starts off in an almost AMEBIX mood, and one of the songs even reminds me of a MANIC STREET PREACHERS ballad (a good thing - to me anyway). The lyrics combine a look at the ills wrought on this world by capitalism with more personal themes. The song "Brother" combines the sentiments of a typical youth crew hymn with slower anthemic rock that seems like a more natural combination. A strong and varied effort, even if it sounds a bit mainstreamish, it still is as DIY as it gets.

LOA LOA "Bolshe Net, Spasibo Za Emotsii" CD (Retrotrash: zzzrecords@hotmail.com)

This may well be one of the weirdest and most chaotic CDs ever released by a Russian band. Moscow's LOA LOA fit their 14 tracks in just 19 minutes. It sounds like a FANTOMAS or a NAKED CITY record on 78. Short bursts of noise and bits of conventional rock; screechy, insect-like vocals and squeaky keyboards; violent structures and unpredictable emotional outbursts. The lyrics are really well-written, though somewhat cryptic, but they're totally impossible to make out, which, perhaps, is the point. A record is as great as it is unlistenable. Which, perhaps, is the point.

MACHETAZO "The Maggot Sessions" EP (First Blood Family)

Spanish death / grind recorded live in the studio. Apparently for them it's big deal as this is the first full lineup recording. Decent sound, lousy - too metal, not too fast - music, and I don't like the growled vocals at all (in general, so nothing personal muchachos!). No lyrics (songs are in Spanish) presented on the otherwise very cool insert; great artwork by Dennis Dread.

MARDICORE №0 zine (Elik Seitov, Yunus-Abad 10-1-83, Tashkent, 700212, Uzbekistan | telcorp@list.ru) in Russian

Brand new zine from Uzbekistan, Middle Asia - dedicated, quite logically, to the punk and skin scene in "exotic" countries of the world. The issue includes reports on the skinhead scene in Lima and on punk scene in Tashkent, an interview with STRAIGHT ANSWER from Indonesia, plus a few rants about work, skinheads and such. Fairly nice and definitely interesting!

MARSCHAK CD (Homo Sentimentalis Recordings: Andrei Skvortsov, PO Box 59, Moscow, 125080, Russia | endishear@yahoo.com)

The aesthetic of the underground emo

scene is lovingly recreated on this CD, first for Moscow's MARSCHAK. Hand-made packaging with the band's name silk-screened over brown cardboard, melancholy weave of guitar melodies, and incomprehensible lung-tear of the vocals (thus the "screamo" tag the band wears with some pride). The verbal thing is also done "the way it should be" - someone's name as band's moniker (a Soviet children's poet this time), pretentious titles ("Gilles De La Tourette Syndrome", "Not To Be Human") combined with schoolboy-level (unless we talk Arthur Rimbaud this level is hardly high) poetry about, you guessed it right, feelings. Emotions. Which are supposed to be larger than life, in a way. Musically, it's not as varied as I might've wanted it yet there are just eight songs on the CD, some additional instruments (namely cello and keyboards) are employed, and some of the build-ups are quite bloody beautiful. Neat neat neat.

MASHA ILAPSHA tape (Staupropylgal) A tape of Slavic harsh noise, done in a typically minimalist and unpretentious manner by Staupropylgal Records boss with two collaborators. There basically are two layers of sound, one sounding like something slowed down and overloaded (bass might be the case), and the other more like feedbacking guitar (or something). Some voices are also occasionally present. The information is provided in Russian and Church Slavonic (spelled both in Cyrillic and Glagolitic letters).

MAXIMUMROCKNROLL №244 zine (PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146-0760, USA) | www.maximumrocknroll.com in English

The world's premiere punk zine still kicks much arse. Coordinators change, columnists resign, cover price goes up (from this issue on, \$4), trends come and go, yet the spirit remains. The columns (which make me spoiled, it's kind of hard to dig most other zine writings after having been exposed to so much good stuff here), the interviews (the most incredible ones are with BOXED IN and RAI KO RIS), the reviews (which are sometimes insightful, sometimes incredibly funny... Shane White!!). Punk movement worldwide seems to be so divided into small sect-like subscenes, and it's things like MRR that give it some sort of bond, and political edge. It's not too US-centered, which I love. **"Metal Dub Sound System"** comp. CDR (MDSS: info@skafandr.ru)

A compilation of non-commercial underground musics - jazz, dub, electronica, funk. Very nice, mellow, groovy and absolutely unpretentious. Metal Dub Sound System's 2nd compilation features Russia's SKAFANDR and Belgium's ORANGE KAZOO, among others.

MORE THAN TALKING "Communication Means" CDR (Nekac)

Godawful band name - though the kids in this Latvian hardcore four-piece are probably too young to know how many memories of the beat-up MODERN TALKING tapes it does evoke. Other than that, they're okay. Okay but hardly more than that. Musically, it's hardcore by the numbers, some bits are thrasher and faster, some are more metal in structure though the sound isn't as heavy as the style requires. The lyrics (most in English, one song in Latvian) are also a bit run-of-the-mill personal stuff mostly, one track concerns meat-eating. The band has potential, and now a good debut recording.

MORGENMUFFEL №12 zine (PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ, England | katchoo63@yahoo.co.uk) in English Very cool cartoon zine from the UK. Isy draws and writes about tree climbing, West Papuan freedom fighters, social club she's involved with, protests against an arms fair in London, working, yeast infections, hospitals, and there are a few other doodling subjects - book reviews, anarchist prisoner penals; all of it non-fiction. The flow is good, the subjects are interesting, the drawings are cool. Issues 2 - 11 have now been reprinted as a book.

MOTHER GOOSE "Psycho Acoustic Nomadic 45 For The Jukebox In Yr Heart" EP (If Society)

From Finland, and quite bloody DIY and all. First track is acoustic arena rock that kind of reminds me of PEARL JAM, only this is better. B-side is a bit like BIG BLACK but the recording isn't extremely clean. Alright music, but I'm not into it somehow. I want my arena rock to be cheesy.

MUKEKA DI RATO / HERO DISHONEST "Burzum Marley / I And I Walked The Line" split EP (If Society / 625 Thrash: www.625thrash.com)

Split EP by Brazil's MDR and Finland's HERO DISHONEST, co-released by Helsinki's If Society and NYC's 625 Thrash. Both bands are melodic and raging, Brazilians are a tad more tuneful, the Finns are more desperate. MDR's first song is a mix of black metal and reggae (!), HERO DISHONEST close their side with a killer cover of "Warsaw" by JOY DIVISION. Great design: full-colour cover and comic insert. According to the insert (they all SCREAM, and for some things I need translations), HERO DISHONEST have much better lyrics (in English) than MDR do (in Portuguese).

NIKMAT OLALIM "Self Devouring Land" EP (Boshet: 44 Shabtai Negbi St., Apt. 2, Jerusalem 93825, Israel | www.gutzy.com/boshet | boshetrecs@yahoo.com)

Very cool "Lord Of The Rings" sample opens this EP by Israeli political hard-

core punk band NIKMAT OLALIM. The recording is rough but energetic, the vocals are somewhere between snarled and sung, and the music in general is quite cool, not too melodic, not too generic, but with some tunes and some recognizability. The cover includes two lengthy essays, and the insert is one side a graphic collage, one side lyric sheet (in Hebrew and English); it took me three listens to this 6-song 7" to read all the English-language materials herein! The songs are dealing with political, social and environmental concerns met by the people of Israel.

NNY "Don't Happy, Be Worry & Live" CD (Manufacture: 5410 Bergen-op-zoom, Nanaimo BC, V9T 2M2, Canada | www.noiseweb.com/manufacture)

International jazz punk band that existed from 1999 to 2001 has released a CD version of their sole album, with a live recording from Spain tacked on as an extra. However, the CD is housed in an LP sleeve! It doesn't include lyrics but has varied rants and statements instead. It's quite similar to the band 2/3 of NNY later formed, VIÁLKA. The music's constantly changing, not chaotically of course but still unpredictable enough; I think it can be described as a sort of condensed art rock with punk sound. It's fun, but over an hour of this stuff is a bit hard to stomach. **"Noise And Drum 'N' Punk"** comp. CDR (Meet Next Life)

A compilation of experimental electronica from various towns in South Russia. The bands range from noisy techno (BIOROBOTS) to more pop type stuff (NEOBILL, one of whose songs reminds of MUM a tad). The CD is packed in a hand-made paper bag and is accompanied by a booklet with lyrics for the few songs that have any. I'd honestly expected something more extreme but it was a pleasant listen nonetheless.

NO HUMANS INVOLVED tape (syphillisation_23@yahoo.com)

Now, this is a seriously disturbing band name (it is explained on the demo's cover). This Danish all-girl band plays quite simple, even primitive punk that's totally great and rocking. The insert has lyrics in both Danish and English, as well as explanations. Well thought out political stuff I'd say. Denmark seems to spew forth so much good traditional punk rock, it's amazing. What I like is that most of these bands have political lyrics, and sing in their native tongue. Something's rotten there but not punk rock.

NOVIY SVET №58 newspaper (Alexandr Yermakov, PO Box 32, St. Petersburg, 194291, Russia | www.novsvet.na rod.ru) in Russian

Russia's most consistent and longest-running anarchist paper. It is crammed with information bits and reactions re-

garding terrorist acts in Russia and war in Chechnya, all sorts of anarchist action reports, confrontations with authorities, ADA (Association of Anarchist Movements) congress in St. Petersburg, small press reviews, etc. etc. Highly recommended.

ODYSSEY "Eleven Reasons To Live Eleven Reasons To Die + 3 Songs" tape (Old Skool Kids)

Cassette version of this Brazilian band's CD, augmented with three compilation tracks. Musically ODYSSEY are doing powerful, contemporary-sounding old school hardcore with somewhat hysterical vocals. The lyrics, which are printed in great, full-colour insert, are in English (with Russian translations also provided), and are slightly vague in their personal self-centeredness. Some (if not most) are dealing with unhappy love. Duh.

OUT COLD / VOORHEES split LP (De-ranged Records: PO Box 543, Stn.P., Toronto ON, M5S 2T1, Canada)

Vinyl version of a split CD originally released by some British label. Five short, fast and to-the-point hardcore songs by New England's OUT COLD and as many just as sharp cuts by Old Blighty's VOORHEES. Lyric sheet is angry. Rock!

"Paint This Octopus" tape (Monopokka)

In fact this is a split tape ft. SOVIET SEX MACHINES (which is obviously another new name for TALONOV NET) and Scotland's NECK DOPPLER. S.S.M. are doing whatever, harsh noise, radio noise, noise with toys, meow noise, BLACK SABBATH noise, which keeps their side of the split fairly entertaining all the way through. The Scots are creepy. The music is kind of noise-based too, with whispered vocals on top, the end result kind of reminding a little of those dodgy esoteric English bands like, I dunno, NURSE WITH WOUND or something. The cover includes hand-painted pictures, and is rad.

"Pank-rok Bez Granits" comp. tape (Primitiv Distro: Sergei Myshkovets, PO Box 389, Minsk, 220090, Belarus | okpunkrock@mail.ru | www.distro-fik.tk) The compilation's title translates as "Punk Rock Without Borders". The majority of 17 bands (at two songs each) are Belarussian or Polish (from Poland itself or Berlin squats and wagenburgs), the only New World band being SOLITARY NEGLECT from Massachusetts. There is at least one other American punk involved here though - EPIDEMIA from Berlin (who open the tape) featured Saira from DETESTATION on vocals. Most of the bands are of the somewhat melodic yet punky punk variety. The standouts (for me at least) include the harder and faster bands, besides the ones mentioned above I'd

also tip SELFSHIT from Minsk. DEVIATION from Grodno could've been another highlight but I think these songs aren't really their best recordings. Then there's KARIES from South-West Petersburg, and they go for UK'82 type of punk. Ok, but again not much more than ok.

"Pank-rok Bez Granits Pt. 2" comp. tape (Primitiv Distro)

Before long, the "Punk Rock Without Borders" compilation series is continued, and it's certainly an improvement over the first volume. The layout is better, the selection of bands is better (though quite a few familiar faces stuck around). The standouts are Lithuania's DR GREEN with their ska punk and BORA with their brutal metallic hardcore, THE DAUNZA CAUSE from Belarus with their weird but powerful hardcore, Poland's SILIKON FEST doing a KINO cover, and American anarchopunks CZOLGOSZ. Would've been cool if any lyrics were included.

PARTIYA "Pank - Moya Zhizn" CDR (Primitiv Distro)

Really simple punk rock here - two dudes (one with a hoarse voice) and one dudette play 18 songs. Mid-tempo (and the tempo does not change), a bit of drive (wish it were a tad more driving), raw recording (nothing in particular). The lyrics, all in Russian, are even more simple than the music; ridiculously simple. Some of the sentiments are nice though. Still, a progress over their early stuff.

PEST OF A CHILD CDR (Jekabs Janusevskis, Rudens 10-146, Riga, LV-1082, Latvia | pestofachild@inbox.lv) There are perhaps thousands of bands of this kind all over the world. Ska punk fad doesn't seem to fade away completely, and there are reasons to that - the music is generally fun and easy to comprehend. But I'm not the only one to have noticed that, and thus ska punk genre is overpopulated by thousands humourless jerks milking the formula dry. Anyway, this lot are from Latvia, and this alone makes for some difference. Some of the track titles are in their native tongue, though only one song is in fact sung in Latvian. Most lyrics are in fairly competent English, and they don't include the beach / goodtime cliches - most of topics are political, questioning the consumerist attitudes, capitalist greed etc. Another thing that sets PEST OF A CHILD apart from the sea of THE MIGHTY MIGHTY BOSSTONES or GOLDFINGER clones (not the sea that PEST OF A CHILD set out to sail, hopefully) is their horn section. It consists of trombone and clarinet, and the latter is a very rare instrument to be found in punk, and indeed a charming one if PEST OF A CHILD is anything to go by. The music's good and it's varied, the lyrics are

alright most of the time (and at times great: "There are positive people and good things, too/ Like music, ice cream and I think you"), nothing more to ask for. I'd not mind removing that annoying piano bonus track that closes the CD though.

PROTEST №666 zine (<http://protestzine.cjb.net> | protestzine@yahoo.com) in English

Great old-style zine from Ireland - started in 1989, stopped in 1997, and re-started in 2004 after having been a website for a while. The interviews are with DISCHARGE, EXTINCTION OF MANKIND and a few BRITISH and Irish bands I never heard of. "The usual zine bollix" (sic) are reviews, bits on censorship, hitching, General N. N. Loan and such like, and I haven't seen these topics covered that often. Excellent design.

PULGARARI "Sampler Oct. 2004" CDR (Musiro)

10 tracks in 125 seconds - South Korean noisecore in all of its (dubious) glory. The recording is quite so-so, but that befits the genre; however, I'd be interested in reading lyrics to songs like "Tabooed By Feminazi Bitches" - the title seems dodgy as hell. One of the tracks is a PATARENI cover. Good layout.

PYLESOS "Zhizn Tamagochi" CDR (demo: Mihail Kolesnik, Alexandrovskaya 47, Tara, Omskaya obl., 646530, Russia | pylesos@mail.ru)

Heavy alternative rock from West Siberia. I'm slightly at a loss for comparisons, not so much 'cause it's such original stuff, it's rather 'cause I'm not that well acquainted with early nineties alternative rock. Inbetween metalcore and noisierock I'd say. It's a tad techy, a tad metally, maybe a little like HELMET or something. At times some sort of nu metal sentiments are felt though. The lyrics, inasmuch I can pick them up by ear, are quite good.

RANCID NEWS №9 zine (PO Box 382, 456-458 The Strand, London, WC2R 0DZ, England | www.rnzine.co.uk) in English

There's more to the UK zine scene than the handwritten / copied / anarchopunk zines, and while I don't give a toss about most of music that Rancid News cover, and I find too many major label apologists featured to be really comfortable, it does have a nice political / direct action vibe going on. The people I've heard about covered in this issue were LEFTOVER CRACK (who came across as really intelligent), LE TIGRE (who I think are full of it), and the kid who wrote "Evasion". The contents are columns, articles (largely political ones), interviews, reviews (some of which could benefit from spell-checking, and adding more information - such as the mention of releases' formats) - the MRR

formula. It was a nice read.

RETIVIY PITEKANTROP "Old Songs - New Mood" CDR (Nov'yo)

Lo-fi music at its goofiest and nicest. Starts with approximation of ska, continues through weird pop, drunk sing-along on "La Bamba" and such. Four songs, original design.

RUDIMENTARY PENI "Catastrophe - Live 1982" LP (no address)

Bootleg LP with archival recordings by England's most obscure and dark anarcho punk band. The material herein has been recorded at different gigs and soundchecks throughout London in Winter and Summer of 1982. There are all in all 27 tracks but some songs are repeated - you get three renditions of "B-Ward", for instance. Like many bootlegs, the sound quality here is not perfect though it is better than some live recordings, largely thanks to the trio's tight playing. The artwork is meagre at best - just a couple of pixelated pictures of Nick Blinko's artwork; comparison to the schizophrenically detailed original pieces isn't favourable for "Catastrophe".

SAIRAAT MIELET "Extended Plays" LP (Passing Bells / Kamaset: Mechelininkatu 24 B 30, 00100 Helsinki, Finland | jukkeli@pp.inet.fi | www.punkinfiland.net/kamanan)

Just because the band's straight edge it doesn't necessarily mean it's got much of an edge. But this does not apply to SAIRAAT MIELET - Finland's original SxE band. It's raging punk rock from start to Finnish, played by dudes with huge mohawks and studded leather jackets (there's quite a lot of pictures on the gatefold cover). Music-wise, it's more akin to traditional, Propaganda-style Finnish hardcore, but it's slightly more controlled. The album compiles everything SAIRAAT MIELET recorded in 1990-1992: two EPs, a demo, outtakes and rehearsal tracks.

SELF SHIT CDR (demo: c/o Green, Igor Konik, PO Box 205, Minsk, 220107, Belarus | xerotika@bk.ru)

Two-man project with drum machine normally spells disaster, but not in this case, no. The music is mostly extreme hardcore or even grind, but it's more varied (the intros in "VVP" and "Fish'ka" are psychedelic weirdness and post punk drone respectively, for instance). Besides their own songs (with short, pointed and brilliant lyrics), they play covers by LAWNMOWER DETH and JOY DIVISION. Very cool.

SENSA YUMA "Up Yours!" CD (Red Giants / Iron Man)

Classic-type melodic punk rock outta England. Somewhat streetpunk-influenced, somewhat '77-ish, quite good if a tad too soft. Good lyrics - mostly political but sometimes personal as well, however, the cover is REALLY yucky! I have to point that out, it really ruins

what would've otherwise been a good record.

SHESTOPSALMIYE / POPA I IGRUSHKI split tape (Xerotika: xerotika@bk.ru)

Elaborate cardboard / sticky tape / rope / plastic bag packaging, two inserts (one for each band), and a cassette. SHESTOPSALMIYE from Minsk, Belarus, appear to be, I dunno, a homegrown NURSE WITH WOUND, minimalist yet weird music mixed with noises and spoken word. POPA I IGRUSHKI from St. Petersburg, Russia, produce chaotic noise using accordion, piano, screams and other crap.

SI DOU LE "A Dream In Our Hearts" EP (Depraved And Devilish: Ingo Rohrer, Sonnhalde 85, 79104 Freiburg, Germany | punkdeluxe@gmx.de)

Two songs of well-recorded, fairly melodic '77-style punk rock from People's Republic of China - apparently SI DOU LE were the first punk band from there to do a European tour... which ended with band members fighting each other using broken bottles (or so I was told). Besides the lyrics, insert includes an essay by quartet's leader Zhang Hai. Excellent design, as is always the case with Depraved And Devilish releases. **SINIAALTO "Hakala"** EP (if Society) Ex-leader of SISSY SPACEK Ila's new project; pretty much ambient noise with some kraut rock influence. They use vintage electronic equipment, and have nice, free-floating melodies. No vocals. The artwork is weird (clear blue vinyl 7", plastic sheet with record-shaped picture, and a plastic insert with information).

SKITSYSTEM "Gra Varld / Svarta Tankar" CD (Havoc: PO Box 8585, Minneapolis, MN 55408, USA | www.havocrex.com)

Half an hour of great, powerful and tight Swedish discore (if this term is still in use). It's got quite good (and not over-the-top metallic) sound, the songs are to the point but not too short. However, there were no lyrics included, at least with my copy of the CD. I had a very hard time trying to decipher them in English-language songs (of which there are three or four), and I have no clue whatsoever what the Swedish songs say. It's great listen, and I'll be among first to admit it, but punk records should have lyrics... Or singers have to sing in a somewhat different manner. Which probably won't be very punk rock.

SOCIALISTIC JONNY GOBLET / ZLOJ POP split tape (Perineum Productions: Armantas Gečiauskas, PO Box 3, Jonava, LT-55002, Lithuania | kachifugetsu@yahoo.co.uk)

Instrumental psychedelic stuff from both America's S.J.G. and Russia's ZLOJ POP. Quite abstract, nice and soothing, lots of delay pedals used. Both bands sound very similar. This is

quite the extent of what I can say about this release.

SODN' DAN tape (Defect Apes)

Really nice if a little standard crusty hardcore punk from Slovenia. The vocals tend to growl and the whole recording somehow sounds as if has been transferred from an mp3 file. The lyrics are mostly in Slovenian but a couple of tracks are in English (including a HELLBOOZERS - whoever they are - cover). The booklet is really nicely done, with translations and illustrations - "Pizda Rt Joski" with its story of a date rape is even made into a comic. Good.

"Sonic Warfare 1" comp. CDR (Peace Or Die: PO Box 31045, Cincinnati, OH 45231, USA | www.peaceordierecords.com)

Well-done compilation CDR by this new American label. Great looking artwork, but there's no lyrics printed - just the contact info. I was instantly suspicious of the music though, 16 tracks (two each by eight bands) in 48 minutes means long songs. The genres covered are punk/hardcore and metal/alternative, and none of the bands really made me fall off my chair and take notice. I was moderately bored all the way through. Thank you but no. I'd love to see more of Chris Christ's illustrations though.

SPACE TO BEING / TASTE OF FLESH split EP (First Blood Family / Beer Is Not Drink / Mass Suicide Society Conspiracy / Thrash Steady Syndicate / Garfield / Phobia / Disastro Sonoro / Rage Dis / Vinyl Disease / Drugs Kill Your Mind / Templetton / Undisless / Outcry: Alexandr Volkov, PO Box 59, St. Petersburg, 194223, Russia | www.outcryrec.narod.ru)

Fastcore slash thrash of the fast-fast-fast variety here from Czech Republic and Indonesia, released by a collaboration of more than a dozen international labels. Both bands are not only fast-fast-fast but also tight-tight-tight. Czechs SPACE TO BEING do a CHARLES BRONSON cover and Indonesians TASTE OF FLESH are more high-pitched. Both have lyrics in grammatically incorrect English. The insert lists companies that do not test their products on animals.

STOP ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS №2 & №4 tape (Stauropygial)

A tape compiling two demos of Russian harsh noise project. On №2 the music is brutal, primitive, and uncompromising. Noise that is noise, not pretentious wank. №4 is slightly more easy on the ear but weird and fucked up nonetheless, at times actually the wall of noise is as thick as on the other side.

LOS SUPPOZITOS / STOMACHAL CORROSION split tape (Vendredi 13 Recordings: 25 Rue Goudouli, 31240

Saint-Jean, France)

Nice and simple stuff - grindcore all the way through but grindcore with a twist. French LOS SUPPOZITOS have a keyboard that's doing its own stupid bit among all the other silliness - they're totally solid though. Brazilian oldtimers STOMACHAL CORROSION (some of their recordings here are from mid-nineties) have a bit of powerviolence influence and cover ROT and AGATHOCLES. No lyrics provided for either band (choice song titles: "James Nausea Bond", "Wowowo Wawawa", "This Again") but the cover is nice.

SVINI'I V KOSMOSE "Tomorrow" CDR (Karma*Mira Records: Kirill Mihailov, PO Box 51, St. Petersburg, 198332, Russia | zine@diy.spb.ru | www.diy.spb.ru)

A limited edition four-song CDEP serving as a teaser for the Vyborg-based band's forthcoming full-length. While SVINI'I V KOSMOSE started off as a punk rock band, on this one they play a mix of hardcore and nu metal, with metal elements unfortunately prevailing in most songs. However crushing they may be, the overall impression is somewhat spoiled by rap-metal tendencies of some of the songs and lack of power in the sound. It's of course good but not heavy enough for metal bits, of which there are plenty. The lyrics are fairly abstract but have a somewhat sociopolitical bent. The music is promising, it's got variety and imagination but it's not there just yet. Hopefully SVINI'I V KOSMOSE will pull it off on their album.

SWINGKID №2 zine (Gunter Meinhardt, Seelenbinder Str. 69, 12555 Berlin, Germany | kamillentee.waldesruh@web.de) in English

Quite decent fanzine focusing on "exotic" punk / rock scenes. It's got interviews with bands from South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, as well as a New Zealander living in Vietnam, anarchists from Iran and European bands KALASHNIKOV and AK-47, some of which was quite amusing. It's got a fairly lengthy article about music and censorship, a shorter one about rockers in Rangoon, travel stuff, arseloads of reviews - there's a lot of stuff in general, and much of it is good! However, the layout (cut and paste, sure enough) might've been more economical - a lot of space is wasted. Good zine, look forward to more issues.

TEA MAN WITH TEA GUM / CEMENTIMENTAL "Pockemon In My Database" split tape (Monopolka: Nalichnaya 27-73, St. Petersburg, 199406, Russia | www.noiseweb.com/monopolka)

St. Petersburg's noise monsters TMWTG on this collaboration with UK's Tim Drage are doing somewhat more experimental stuff than normally, us-

ing toys (lots of toys!), vocal samples, household appliances, even guitars, yet still they do not lose their harsh edge. There's still enough of their trademark bump 'n' grind brutality. One of the more interesting and listenable releases on Monopolka. The cover's good, too.

TEKKEN / TERROR REVOLUCIONA-RO3 split tape (Musiro Records: #303 Oryung Green Villa, Yeokchon 2-dong 46-20, Eummpyeong-gu, Seoul 122-900, South Korea | www.geocities.com/musirorecords | musirorecords@yahoo.com)

Very fine split tape with two extreme hardcore bands. TEKKEN are from France and play grind-influenced fast hardcore with literally one-line lyrics and covers of songs by BEASTIE BOYS and RAMONES (which somewhat contradicts the label's motto of "Thrash not NYHC", hardcore versions of songs by NYC bands = NYHC). Brazilia's TERROR REVOLUCIONARIO are more metal in sound but also have grindcore influence. The lyrics are somewhat lengthy, if only comparatively so, but they are in Portuguese so I can't possibly comment on them. The cover is really nicely done.

TOXIC NARCOTIC "Shoot People Not Dope" CD (Rodent Popsicle Records: PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, USA)

Either I can't stand big quantities of TOXIC NARCOTIC's brutal sneer, or their best songs end up on EPs. This CD is a 5-song affair, mostly their singalong metal-punk, but some reggae dives are present (namely on the last track, "Cockroach"), and are nice. The lyrics are intelligent and nihilistic, mostly dealing with the violence that humans unleash on each other and on themselves, oh, and sellout bands are given a mention too. One of TOXIC NARCOTIC's best releases.

TRAVOLTAS "Travoltas' Party!" CD (Knock Knock: 394 Hewlett Avenue, Patchogue, NY 11772, USA | www.knockknockrecords.com)

Dutch pop punkers TRAVOLTAS are featured here with an unplugged record of theirs. Acoustic guitars, handclaps, some organ, a fair bit of woo-hoo vocals, and the good times had by the participants are reflected well in the sonic vibes. Besides their own songs the band plays covers by BEACH BOYS and BAD RELIGION. No punk here at all, just nice, if a little retro, feel-good acoustic pop.

TURN LEFT FOR THE REVOLUTION №18 zine (Ralf Baeuerlein, Gartenstr. 26, 79098 Freiburg, Germany) in English

This long-running newsletter from the prettiest town in Germany is now more of a small zine, there are a few music news inside, but most of it is writing by Ralf and a few of his mates about black

bloc, graffiti, prisons, demonstrations and other such things of interest to anarcho-punks. Really cool.

"Twinkle Stars And Lullabys" comp. tape (Monopolka)

A compilation of tracks created with Casio synth as a basic means. The music ranges from primitive electropop to wacky experimental stuff to all-out progressive rock. Among the bands featured are CO-VESSELS, TEA MAN WITH TEA GUM, HACKELSTORM, PRIPADOK etc. - no contact information presented on the (generally picturesque) cover. What's weird is the fact that this compilation, started a few years ago, sounds remarkable similar to some of today's trendiest pop.

UMLAUT "Havoc Wreakers" LP (Combat Rock Industry / Pathetique: PL 843, 13501 Hameenlinna, Finland | pathetique@iobox.fi)

They fucking sold out. Gone is the "all songs under 30 seconds" rule - the first track is like 40 seconds long for fuck's sake! Anyway, this secret CATHARSIS side project is playing crushing heavy crusty rock'n'roll hardcore like nobody's business, and with great fucking lyrics too. Everything about this record is top notch, seriously.

URO "Requiem" LP (Plague Bearer: PO Box 604, 2200 Kobenhavn N, Denmark | mareridt@ofir.dk)

Perhaps the gloomiest and yet the best record that was released lately. A fucking masterpiece, up there with "Unknown Pleasures" and "No Doves Fly Here". This is dark anarcho punk from Copenhagen, reminding me of a mix between SHARPEVILLE, ZOUNDS, CONFLICT and CHIMERA, and while I describe it thusly it's actually very original, has a sound of its own - the comparisons are just to give you an idea. The album's more gloomy and controlled than their debut EP, and features cello and keyboards quite prominently. The booklet has great lyrics (in Danish) and great artwork (by one of the URO's three singers). Slit your wrists - you're provided with plenty of good reasons now. (The band is no more, too).

VIOLA "Acoustic Romantic 45 For The Jukebox In Your Heart" EP (If Society)

Finland's indie pop band VIOLA has made an unplugged record - with just two songs. They sound quite as dynamic and charming here as they do on their proper records, maybe a bit less-fi; with guest violin player they somehow remind of what PULP did in the 1980s. No lyrics included and very little in the way of packaging, unfortunately.

VITAMIN ROSTA "Samosohraneniye" CDR (Sampizdatsozdat: Dmitry Novikov, PO Box 23, Nizhnekamsk-9, 423579, Tatarstan, Russia | www.vitaminstar.narod.ru)

A proper studio album by this Tatarstan-based melodic punk band. Melodic as in '77, not as in '94 though some of the songs are quite speedy. Even the faster ones have some anthemic qualities. The music is nice and inventive, maybe the vocals are slightly weak. The lyrics - which are excellent - cover antifascism, DIY, street crime, children, love and other themes, both personal and not. The outro is using a quote from an Erlend Loe book. A really well-done release here. Karma Mira plans to put this out on tape.

VITAMIN X "Badtrip" CD (Havoc)

The new album by Dutch hardcore masters. It's good but I guess I'm into their older fast hardcore stuff more. This one's rather more crossover, especially in the vocals. Some songs ("Burn 'Em Down" for example) are even done in a later, metally BLACK FLAG style! It's got enough variety for 21-song album, but not quite enough of a focus for a 25-minute one. The CD includes a full-colour cover and a 16-pg. booklet. What I found rather odd is that the band referred in the lyrics to American history and realities rather than those of their home country - things like the KKK, presidents, war on drugs (in its US version). The lyrics are mostly political / social in nature though which is good in any case. Great sound (Menno Bakker / Bunt Studios, need I say more?) Just to get it off my chest: they look boyband-pretty on the back of the booklet.

VOLNOSTS №2 zine (Anvar Kalandarov, Dustlik 6-35, pos. Ulugbek, Tashkent, 702132, Uzbekistan) in Russian. Quite small-ish DIY hand-written zine from Middle Asia - a good UNCONFORM interview, some reviews (largely for local stuff), and a few thoughts from the editor, who seems like a nice fellow. Sweet thing, if a little tiny.

WARCOLLAPSE "Crap, Scrap And Unforgivable Slaughter" EP (First Blood Family)

This old Swedish crust band has unearthed some covers of English punk classics they did in 1993-1994. The point is slightly beyond me to tell you the truth, but the butchery is done tastefully and respectfully, the sound's good and the layout is nice. Covered is material by AMEBIX, ANTISECT and DISCHARGE. Grey vinyl.

WARNING №1 zine (PO Box 40113, Portland, OR, 97240-0113, USA) in English

The new zine from "R'Lyeh Rising" editor - H. P. Lovecraft stuff is gone but punk's not dead to say the least. There are interviews with BLOOD SPIT NIGHTS and KONTATTO, an unreleased WRETCHED one from 1985, and a few things related to DISCHARGE - the interview with their road manager on "Grave New World" tour, a letter to MRR

from one of the members and a review of one of the reunion gigs. It's rounded out by some conspiracy theorizing, band photos, and a brief overview of some of Portland's current bands. Great first issue!

WATER INTO BEER №4 zine (Tim Livesey, 48 West Park Grove, Leeds, LS8 2AU, England | waterintobeer@hotmail.com | www.waterintobeer.tk) in English

Quite thick (56 pages, not as in "sorta stupid") zine by a bunch of blokes from North of England. Interviews (bands GBH, EIGHTY SIX, and SUAVE BASTARDS, plus randomdamage.net website), columns, rants and such. Musically their tastes seem to lean towards the pop punk thing, but the humour and general niceness more than make up for that. Great zine, though that does not apply to the layout.

WHEN MY AUTHORITIES FALL CDR (Xerotika / No Manipulation / Running Out: Valik, PO Box 283, Minsk, 220114, Belarus | dodib@tut.by)

Latvian hardcore band WHEN MY AUTHORITIES FALL has a debut eight-song CD released, curiously enough, in Belarus. Their music is heavily metal-influenced but is still basically hardcore. Soundwise, the dual guitars and dual vocals (one high singing, one low growling) provide enough variation for the band's music as it's slightly monotone in large doses - and eight tracks is a fair-sized helping. The lyrics are in English and Latvian, and are really well-written. There are also comments for each song, at times lengthier than the lyrics themselves, talking about the ways that we can resist capitalist system - in our personal lives as well as in the world at large. The last track, "Future Is In Our Hands, Prepare To Work", is certainly a standout with its mournful yet hopeful vocals and positive yet critical lyrics.

WHEN MY AUTHORITIES FALL / ARGUMENT 5.45 split CD (Old Skool Kids / Slowman)

Split CD by two ex-USSR hardcore bands - WHEN MY AUTHORITIES FALL are from Riga, ARGUMENT 5.45 are from Moscow; four songs by each. The Latvians have re-recorded choice cuts off their first disc, while the Russian combo is debuting herein. WMAF feature former and current members of CITA ATTIEKSME, PEST OF A CHILD and IN.STORA and play tough, heavily metalized fierce hardcore with dual vocals. The new recording done in Riga's Phoenix Studio sounds remarkably more powerful than the early material. Booklet includes not only the lyrics, but also their translations into Russian and English, as well as comments that spell out the sociopolitical ideas behind the lyrics. ARGUMENT 5.45 (the name of the band formed by former

and current members of SKYGRAIN, TRI KRESTA and UNCONFORM refers to the calibre of Kalashnikov machine gun) play fairly varied music that song in, song out uses bright melodies, crushing power and epic structures. Besides the lead singer Kirill "Student" Tolkachov the vocals are belted out by a whole bunch of people, and the end result is slightly schizophrenic - though it works. Unfortunately, the lyrics (which are definitely a strong point here) are only accompanied by shortish English comments. Perhaps this is one of last year's best independent releases in Russia.

YARCHE TSYACHY SOLNTS "Brighter Than A Thousand Suns" CD (Old Skool Kids / Slowman)

Eight-song mini-CD which is the first and simultaneously the last "hello / bye" from the Moscow-based three-piece (featuring ex-members of SKYGRAIN and TRI KRESTA). Band's name repeats the title of a KILLING JOKE LP and describes (decies) the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Now, to describe the music contained herein... Hard-hitting, heavily noisy, calculated experimental rock - somewhere around the pastures of Steve Albini and K. K. Null but not precisely. Short songs (at just under 100 seconds on average) with short lyrics mostly dedicated to violence and domination. They are translated into English on the insert, by the way. A great record. I'd even go as far as to call it faultless - it's stylish and strong by all measurements.

ZASRALI SOLNTSE "Soprotivleniye / Zavisit Ot Tebya" tape (Meet Next Life: Alexandr Koptyayev, Pervomaiskaya 7-32, Novorossiysk, 353901, Russia | kabzzzon@rambler.ru)

NY-style hardcore from Krasnodar in South Russia, two mini-albums on one tape including also handmade paper bag and booklet with lyrics (in Russian). The music is mostly mid-tempo, with mosh tendencies and occasional melodic bits (actually, there's a pop punk song each on both sides). Good recording, and quite good non-conformist, anti-capitalist lyrics.

ZOAMBO ZOET WORKESTRAO "Svakoga Dana U Wakom Pogledu Sve Manje Naradujem" CD (Manufacture)

Weird-arse jazzy rock from somewhere in ex-Yugoslavia (Slovenia perhaps, but I may be mistaken). A lot of instruments and styles are used. I tend to call this type of oddball music jazz-punk, it's got some sonic elements of punk and has just as little concern for the listener's well-being as (any half-decent) punk rock has but it's still basically jazz, in compositional structures and all that jazz. It's quite rocking at places, but mostly freaked out and fucked up techy wank.

MARSCHAK

Dasha Z. is a drummer in a few Moscow-based bands, the better known of which is MARSCHAK. She's also an active participant in the anarchopunk community there, and one of the nicest Muscovites in the world. The interview was conducted via email.

? So, what is your name and what do you do? What are the most important things about you?

My name is Dasha, I play in the bands ENOLA, MARSCHAK and TEST NA ZOMBI, in all of them as a drummer. It's probably most important - three of my bands, each separately, with all the bandmates I am connected by much more than just music, it's friendship, shared ideas and views, shared protest... For me the participation in the DIY scene is the most valuable thing in life right now.

? How would you describe MARSCHAK? What was the history of the band? How did your music change over the years? What do you think now of your album? When are you making another?

In 2002 we got together with Andrei and Timur and decided to play emocore as all three of us liked this style of music a lot. But at the same time we'd never separated ourselves from hardcore, we were always a part of DIY scene, and for us hardcore was and is something bigger than only music. For us it is important that the band is active outside of music and that everyone is personally taking part in some kind of an initiative. After Andrei, the singer, left, the music changed towards darker and harsher hardcore but it still remained melodic. The lyrics have also changed and have started to reflect social topics and view of the surrounding world through the prism of the personal

worldview of Timur, who'd become our new singer. Now we've made a new set of songs and we plan to record a new album. As for the old one, we like it despite some screw-ups... Yes, you can always improve on something but what you have is what you have :)



? Why did Andrei (first singer) and Dima (first bassist) leave the band?

Andrei left because of a long-lasting conflict that destroyed our warm friendship and created a huge gulf between us which at the moment we thought could not be overcome. As for Dima, he left because he simply didn't want to be doing music anymore, he's involved in a number of initiatives and had decided that it's better to dedicate himself to that, we'd supported him and remained close friends.

? Do you find it weird that most members of MARSCHAK are / were politically involved yet the lyrics were mostly personal? What the lyrics are about in newer songs?

Oh well, that's weird but Andrei

has been... kinda emo guy :) and for him his personal feelings played a very large role and that's why the lyrics were like that. Though he wasn't far from different ideas and initiatives, his lyrics weren't social at all. Now the lyrics have changed, as I already mentioned, but the songs haven't become explicitly political with calls for something or slogans, Timur prefers to write more existential and alienated lyrics that correspond with his worldview, but there's political subtext to them.

? What other bands have you been involved in? Are there (m)any girls playing in Moscow punk bands? What do you think of "girl-punk" projects such as VOSMAYA MARTA or BLONDINKA KSYU?

I play drums for two more bands. ENOLA is actually my first band that exists for a very long time, right now we're temporarily not playing any gigs, working on new material, I think we'd soon surprise everyone with our new stuff. And also another band, brand-new, TEST NA ZOMBI, we play positive SxE hardcore. As for girls, there are unfortunately very few in DIY hardcore scene, and only some of them play any instruments which of course is very bad. I don't know what happens in the so-called sellout punk scene 'cause I'm not really following its developments, there seem to be some female bands but to me they are uninteresting and boring, and as a rule they are led by men which is even worse.

? You seem to be involved with organizing quite a few gigs in Moscow. What makes all the hassle worthwhile? What are some of the better memories you have of the gigs you organized? Are many of them politically-themed / benefits? What do

MARSCHAK

**at St. Petersburg School 32,
2003**



you think of clubs in Moscow?

Yeah, sometimes we do organize concerts, and it's a right hassle, but it's worth it when a positive atmosphere is created, you see a lot of interested people, you get a feeling of solidarity, a feeling of this all not being in vain... but it happens rarely, you can only make good gigs at nice non-commercial places like Jerry Rubin Club, and at gigs at a place like R-Club the atmosphere itself isn't very nice. And besides I'm not really interested in just doing gigs, I somehow want them connected to this or that event, I want the people to get, apart from a chance to have some fun, some sort of food for thought, some information about various initiatives and also a chance to support them. We've done some theme concerts - in support of ALF and Food Not Bombs, anti-military concerts etc. The coolest one perhaps has been in St. Petersburg, we organized it with our friends there, it was dedicated to animals rights. It was really cool there, huge gym hall in a school, lots of distro and

literature tables, films, free vegan food and flyers, and lots of good bands and people. As for clubs in Moscow, lately their numbers have decreased... I mean, there are some, but I have no desire to deal with them. Usually because of thug bouncers and financial arrangements, when the club is keeping 70 per cent of the door, when we have to, say, pay the out-of-town bands, it really sucks. So we constantly have to be in search of new places that would be more or less fitting for punk / hardcore gigs.

? What do you think of the war in Chechnya? Who do you feel more threatened by - Chechen separatists or Kremlin imperialists? What do you think are the sensible ways of opposing the war, if any?

War in Chechnya is a war of two sides, Russian imperialism and Chechen nationalism, it's a war in which people, especially Chechen people, are only treated as cannon-fodder. It is obvious that both Kremlin and Chechen terrorists are playing their own game for oil, for

economical and political domination in the Caucasus region. Hiding behind false values, the Islamic fundamentalists are waging a "holy war" and destroy their own people. In their turn, Russian authorities are conducting the anti-Chechen campaign in Russia, force their regime in Chechnya. No authority - neither religious fanatics nor Russian imperialists - has a right to force and install its domination over Chechen people. Probably it would sound too Utopian, but the direct resistance of Chechen people might've changed the situation, the actions of a united national front that would be independent of Islamic fanatics AND Russian authorities would've been capable of ending this war...
? What's your opinion on the political situation in Russia right now in general? How do you like Putin's regime as compared to, say, Soviet times (if you remember any of those)?

The situation we have is such - the former KGB man is at power in our country right now, and that explains a lot. It might seem that

people have got some freedom and that Soviet times are over, but as a matter of fact the freedom is constantly getting restricted, human rights are abused, and there's no freedom of speech (which our President likes to talk about so much) to speak of, it's enough to switch on the telly and watch some news coverage there. Political situation in Russia is an issue in its own right, it won't even make sense to explain everything in a couple of sentences... when you think of it, the words "Big Brother's watching you" spring to mind.

? You seem to be involved with one of the Food Not Bombs groups in Moscow. How is the thing happening in general? What are the difficulties that you face? What's the difference between your group and other FNB groups in Moscow?

It all started with the idea of doing a benefit concert dedicated to the FNB initiative. After a successful

gig we've managed to gather some money which we used for the first action. There were just about five of us back then, plus a group that came to support us at the serving. Then after a couple of bigger actions, for instance, a serving after the Critical Mass ride, the people have gotten interested in FNB initiative. New groups were getting started. Today there are four active groups in Moscow, each Sunday one of them is making an action at the square of three train stations (Komsomolskaya square). It all goes quite positively, in 15 minutes we give out about 100 portions of hot vegan food, as a rule it's vegetable stew made of cabbage, carrot and potato, or buckwheat porridge with beans or lentils, or soup.

Apart from food we are also giving out clothes and flyers that tell about ideas behind FNB, our attitude towards authorities and wars, homelessness situation in Russia. Alongside regular Sunday actions some of the Moscow FNB

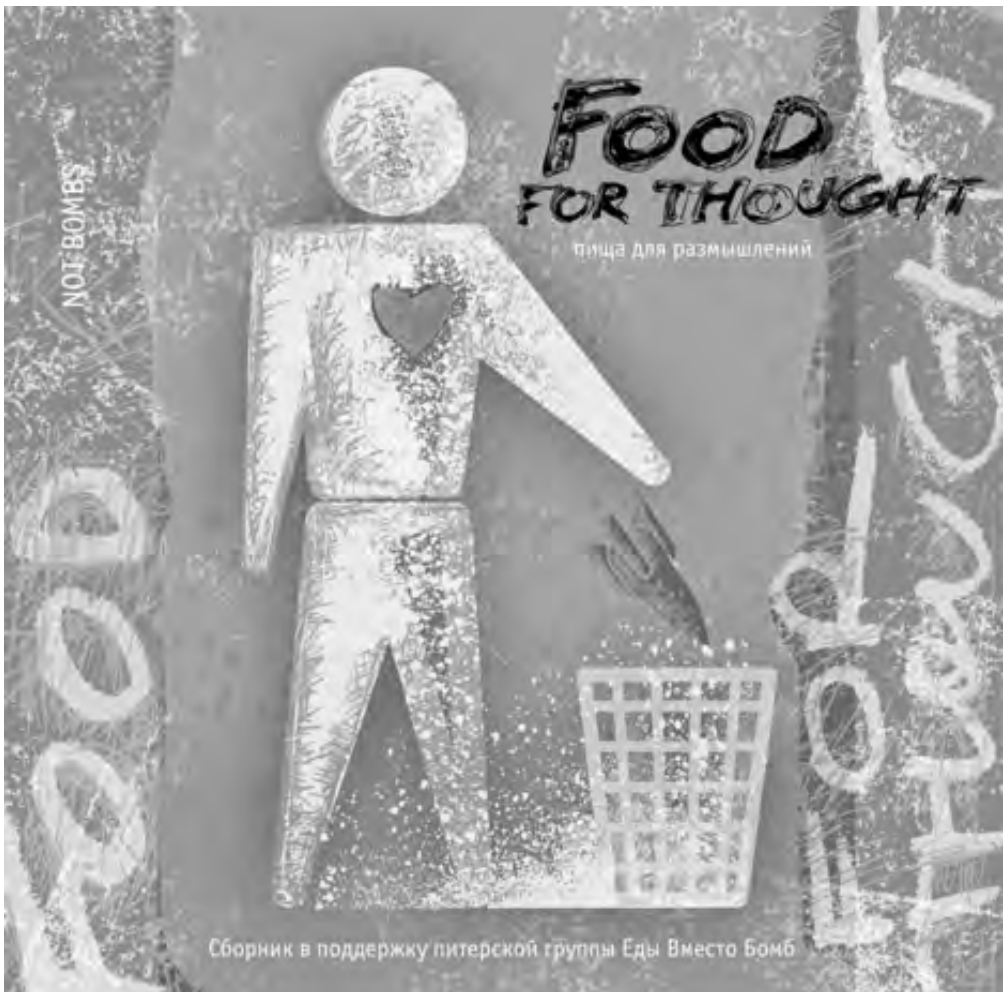
groups take part in the anarchist initiatives. I think that most interesting of these sort of events took place at environmental protest camp in Perm in 2004, as well as two actions as a part of antimilitarist festival in February 2005 in Moscow. Of course we have some problems, for instance, the most urgent one is free food, it's really hard to find sources of it but of course we find our ways around and keep doing our actions. What matters most is that there are more and more interested people, recently some new groups have formed in Russia - in St. Petersburg, Perm, Kirov - and outside - in Kiev, Minsk. So the activity is increasing, it's really cool.

? Anything to add? Contact information etc.

Right now we're making a website for Russian FNB collective, I hope it'd start working soon. If you want to get in touch about FNB or just to have a chat, write to hypersonic@riseup.net.



Food Not Bombs in Moscow



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