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Youth Subcultures as a form of Protest to Authoritarian Regime (on the Example of Soviet Ukraine in the 1950s–1980s)

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A youth subculture in the *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (USSR) and in Ukraine appeared in the late 1950's and 1960's. The subculture is defined as a system of values, types of behaviour and a lifestyle of a particular social group which differs from the dominant, general culture in society, although they are interrelated. The emergence of the youth subculture phenomenon was caused by political situation in the country. This phenomenon is proved by Svetlana Levikova, Russian researcher of youth subcultures. She points out that the dynamics of the youth subculture depends on the policy as well as on the political situation and political regime in the country. Any soft policy or regime furthers the phenomenon of youth subculture, and vice versa, the regime of hard policy leads to a sharp decline in the number of youth subcultures (Levikova S., 2004, p. 321). Therefore, the era of "Khrushchev thaw" became favorable for various subcultures.

"Stilyagi" was the first subculture association of young people appeared in the late 1950s. It was the movement of young people who tried to imitate the western way of life, thus contrasted with the image of exemplary Soviet youth. We should note that the party structures were anxio-

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us that the Stilyagi were not interested in Komsomol meetings and party ideas in general (Reference by the secretary, 1958, p. 87). The Stilyagi wore narrow trousers, baggy jackets, listened to swing and rockabilly (an early form of rock and roll), and admired dancing. They were also interested in the cultural heritage of the western world which was banned in the USSR. They read E. Hemingway, R. Oldington, collected reproductions of impressionists etc. Similar groups of young people appeared in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa and Vinnytsia and spread throughout Ukraine (Resolutions of the Presidium, 1959, p. 251).

The party organs considered bourgeois propaganda to be one of the main reasons for the emergence of this movement. In 1958 it was stated that bourgeois propaganda paid much attention to such a phenomenon as "Stilyagi". For example, the Voice of America radio station broadcasted jazz music specifically for them.

The Stilyagi were predominantly represented by the so-called "gilded youth", an intellectual, creative, youth elite group. And this was understandable, because this style required significant amount of money, certain acquaintances and opportunities inaccessible to the majority of young people. This fact helped the authorities to campaign for discrediting this nonconformist movement: what is not accessible to all people is easy to represent as a hostile thing. Therefore, Stilyagi became apostates and anti-social elements (Zubkova E., 1999, p. 153).

The Committee for State Security (KGB) also conducted fight against the Stilyagi. They were accused of being idleness and supporters of Western ideas. Police raids were conducted in places where the Stilyagi met. They were arrested, eliminated from the Komsomol and higher educational establishments. They were forced to cut their hair and their trousers were cut off. One of the means of combating the Stilyagi was the formation of negative public opinion about them using the media. Caricatures and critical reports about them were regularly published in the Soviet press. In the 1960's this subculture lost its popularity.

A significant number of areas of domestic associations were formed under the influence of countercultural movements that developed in the United States and Western European countries. At the beginning the Soviet youth borrowed the names, forms and main features of these associations, although gradually they became original. Vitalij Kulik, a political scientist, describes Ukrainian youth subcultures as a combination of Western influence, innovative elements, national traditions and rudiments of the post-Soviet culture (Kulik V. et al., 2000, p. 338).

In Ukraine in the late 1960's – in the early 1970's the first groups of hippies appeared. They mostly attempted to copy western hippies. Mem-

bers of the national associations were admired their ideology, music and had long hair. However, the first hippies were aimed at expressing social protest. It includes the “denial” of social reality, principles of the social system and the rejection of certain manifestations of socio-political life; indignation of an existing regime; protest against certain tendencies in their policy (Barmatova S., 2003, p. 129). The views of active participants and leaders of hippies associations affirmed it. Thus, one of their participants from Cherkasy (1969–1971) disseminated negative information about the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Komsomol. He stated that there was no democracy, freedom of speech in the USSR. He considered that the introduction of Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia in 1968 was an occupation; supported the slogan of the Czechoslovak hippies “Council without Communists” and praised the Western way of life (Reports of the Ministry, 1971, p. 58–59). Also, some young hippies who were detained during the raids in 1969–1970 in Kyiv expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime and wanted to emigrate to the United States, England, France (Letters to the Central Committee, 1971, p. 42).

V. Yeresko, the head of the hippies association founded in Lviv in the 1970s, criticized the existing system by spreading negative statements about the Komsomol. He believed that “the Komsomol ceased to be the true youth organization” (Materials about the fact, 1970, p. 7). The association consisted of 12 participants. The secretary of the Central Committee of the Komsomol O. Kapto in a memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine described the social composition of the association as follows: “... the overwhelming majority of them are persons who are not engaged in socially useful work, students, pupils, officials and some young workers. Some of them were members of the Komsomol. “He described their activities as “blind admiration for all Western things, ignoring the rules of socialist way of life”. The members of this group were also accused of drug addiction, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity (Letters to the Central Committee, 1971, p. 45–48).

Also in the early 1970’s the group of young people in Lviv tried to create a “party of hippies’ freedom”. L. Skorokhodova was the initiator of its creation. She wrote a program, an oath for members and also made membership cards and badges. Six members of the association decided to hold a constituent assembly, but the police prevented their intentions. L. Skorokhodova was sent to a correctional labour colony for minors. Other initiators were eliminated from higher educational establishments (Materials about the fact, 1970, p. 1–4, 12–14).

During the late 60’s – 70’s young people who propagated the movement of hippies appeared in many cities of Ukraine. At the end of 1970,

Kyiv Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine reported to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine that during the past two years party and public organizations, administrative authorities had taken effective measures to identify and cease the activities of youth groups of hippies. On behalf of the Communist Party municipal committee, the municipal committee of Komsomol in conjunction with the police forces conducted raids in Kyiv. During the raids they discovered the places where hippies assembled, their contacts with representatives from other cities as well as foreign tourists were revealed. The members of these associations were mostly young people aged 16–18. They were mostly unemployed as well as pupils, students, young employees, members of the Komsomol. We should note that during such raids, young people were detained and forced to write explanatory notes, some of the detainees were forced to cut their hair. Individual conversations were held with all young people and their parents in the Party committees and the Department of Internal Affairs. An atmosphere of public censure was created around them. Some hippies were brought to justice, 7 people were excluded from higher educational institutions, some young people were eliminated from the Komsomol, 4 people were convicted of drug trade, and drug addicts were forced to undergo compulsory treatment. Despite the measures taken, a small number of hippies whose activities were strictly controlled remained in the city (Letters to the Central Committee, 1971, p. 42–43). Komsomol committees and police forces in Kirovohrad used the same methods in fighting with hippies (Transcript of a meeting, 1971, p. 6).

But these measures were not successful. Hippies' ideas continued to spread among young people. In this regard, on February 1, 1971, the Central Committee of the Komsomol of Ukraine held a meeting of secretaries of the regional Komsomol Committees where they discussed the issue of strengthening the participation of the Komsomol in the struggle against hippies (Letters to the Central Committee, 1971, p. 50). The use of force methods in combating subcultures brought only a temporary result and led to their clandestine existence, uncontrolled use of drugs and alcohol in their environment.

In the mid 1960's the first groups of young people who liked various music styles appeared. Most young people admired rock music. A number of rock groups came into being in Ukraine. They performed songs in English, Ukrainian and Russian. The authorities at first were very loyal to the youth art. In large cities of Ukraine, music rock contests and concerts were organized with the assistance of the Komsomol committees. The first concert took place on January 1, 1966 in Kharkiv. The first rock-n-roll ille-

gal magazine “Bit-luna” was first published in Kharkiv. Two issues were published in 1967 with a circulation of 8 and 3 copies, 4 of which were confiscated by the KGB. The authors were punished administratively (Kushnir A., 1994, p. 193–194).

A large-scale event, the contest of vocal-instrumental ensembles “Big-Beat”, took place in 1968 in Kyiv. Musical groups from Riga, Kharkiv, Odesa came to the contest. Money collected from the sale of tickets and badges were transferred to the Peace Foundation (Troickij A., 1990, p. 339). But the reaction in the socio-political life suspended all the initiatives in this direction. Youth café-clubs were shut down and the repertoire of the entertaining establishments was strictly controlled. Rock musicians were forced to perform illegally. Ukrainian-language singers were under special pressure in the 1970’s because of the struggle with “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism”.

In the mid-1970s there was an intensification of crisis phenomena in the internal life of the USSR: low quality of life, the unsatisfactory situation in the social sphere. The process of public organizations bureaucratization intensified, they did not represent the main interests and demands of the society. Crisis phenomenon in the Komsomol deepened. Reduction in admittance to the association in 1979–1984 by 27.9% as well as the spread of such a phenomenon as “abandonment without withdrawal from the register” just confirmed that fact that young people were disappointed in the Komsomol (Resolution of the Central Committee, 1985, p. 118).

Among the young people are spreading such negative things as social passivity, extremism, consumer approach to life, alcoholism and crime. The number of young people who used drugs increased. Only according to official figures the number of people with substance dependence and drug addiction in Ukraine in 1980 increased by 3.2 times compared to 1960 and amounted to 4,267 people (Levin B. and Levin M., 1991, p. 50).

It should be noted that in the late 1970s – the first half of the 1980s the number of youth subculture unions increased and their activities became diverse. Thus, according to a political scientist V. Kulik, there was a real explosion of youth subcultures in the USSR and a rock festival in Yarochyn, Poland, was one of the factors. At that time in Ukraine the number of youth subcultures increased; hippies, punks, bikers and other youth subcultures became more widespread (Kulik V. et al., 2000, p. 366–367).

At the same time, it is complicated to analyse these associations owing to the lack of sources: during that period processes in the youth environment were suppressed and therefore not investigated. There was also no information about non-governmental associations in the media:

the press, radio and television did not even mention that there were other forms of youth amateur activities besides the Komsomol and the pioneer movement.

In that period, the hippie movement continued to spread. The associations of the late 70's and early 80's already paid a lot of attention to their own ideology unlike the associations of the 60's and early 70's which borrowed features of western hippies. The movement of hippies, which in the USSR was called "the system", diffused mainly among students and educated people. The views of the hippies in the USSR were similar, but the Ukrainian "system" had a significant protest potential, "combined "authentic" tendency and the Beat philosophy" (Kulik V. et al., 2000, p. 372–373).

Except the propagation of freedom ideals, hippie had a negative attitude towards the state and its institutions which, in their opinion, restricted individual freedom through coercion and violence. The hippies deprecated any organized structures. So, social perspectives we should find in such a community where there was no regulation of relations between people in general. Therefore, in order to create a perfect society, it was necessary to abandon all structures. This principle hippies realized in their associations which did not have a clear organizational structure, programs, statutes, leaders. Thus, contradicting themselves to overly bureaucratized official bodies and public organizations. Even the way the Soviet hippies called themselves as a "system", according to Aleksandr Fajn, was a certain irony that meant the absence of any system at all (Fajn A., 1989, p. 85). However, we cannot assert that hippies did not have any governance, leaders and rules. According to the researcher of the subculture Tatiana Shepanskaya, they did have it, but in an implicit, symbolic form (Shepanskaya T., 1990, p. 41).

They preserved their own freedom and individuality through escapism which meant going beyond the boundaries of society and the state since it was necessary for a member of the group in accordance with the hippie ideology (Mazurova A. and Rozin M., 1990, p. 107). In practice, this process was expressed in non-participation in socio-political life. Hippies refused to participate in non-governmental organizations, vote in elections, serving in the army; sometimes even work and study were unacceptable for them. This just showed their socio-political indifference and passivity. Such behaviour (refusal of citizens to participate in the political life of society, their indifferent attitude to civil rights and responsibilities) is a manifestation of passive protest against the existing order, the form of government etc. Passive protests are not less important for socio-political life than active participation as it shows the presence of significant deformations and the need for change.

The hippies did not participate in society life by means of using the symbols that were not adopted in the prevailing culture: faith in God in a society where atheism was propagated; the use of their own language (slang) and English words while the Russian language was official. Thus, Tatiana Shepanskaya, the researcher of youth culture, defines these symbols as “antinorms”. Also, the “antinorm” for a part of the “system” was long hair which was considered a symbol of freedom from the dictates of society (Shepanskaya T., 1993, p. 100).

One of the main aspects of the hippie ideology was pacifism which rejected all forms of aggression and violence as well as national and racial prejudices. This principle also became a source of apoliticism and ignoring the authorities because hippies believed that the rulers began wars and forced people to fight. Therefore, hippies used passive protest as a form of socio-political activity. They promoted no participation in politics and society. This led to political passivity, reluctance to participate in socio-political life, especially within the official structures, among young people.

In the late 70's – early 80's there were subcultures which significantly radicalised the youth environment. Their activities often acquired the features of counterculture that was characterized by standards completely opposite to generally accepted norms of society. Among them was punk subculture. At first they were popular in Moscow and Leningrad. According to Vitalij Kulik, by the middle of the 1980's 30% of the adolescents considered themselves to be punks (Kulik V. et al., 2000, p. 368). They were mostly high school and vocational school students, workers and people from low-income families.

Despite the fact that punk movement was popular among young people, there was almost no information about this process in the documents of public organizations of that period. The punks were twice mentioned in the documents of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine: firstly, in 1981, in connection with the activity of the group in Odessa which consisted of 11 people mainly high school and vocational school students (Reference, detailed notes, 1983, p. 41–42); secondly, in 1983, when the secretary of the Kyiv Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Yuriy Yelchenko informed about the re-education of young people who “showed interest in the so-called “punks” (Notes and references, 1984, p. 10).

Not having a clear ideology, some of the punk leaders supported the idea of “society without a state apparatus” and “the destruction of any social relations in general” (Zapesockij A. and Fajn A., 1990, p. 171). Punks also promoted a negative attitude to work, social parasitism. Unlike hip-

pies, they proclaimed active demonstrative resistance to society which combined the use of “shock-protest” and destructive and extremist behaviour. This behaviour showed the absolute alienation of this group of young people from people values and was associated with significant deformations of the lifestyle, the vacuum of values, and the uncertainty of life prospects. Punk ideology was characterized by universal negativism, the absence of a positive alternative. One of the main attributes of punk subculture was their music – punk rock. This music was to be rigid, fast, quite loud and a lot of attention was paid to the texts which touched upon the most important socio-political problems. Their texts were accompanied by swear words.

Bikers and football fans, occurred in the late 1970’s, can also be considered as varieties of spontaneous protest with pronounced destructive features.

The struggle with youth subculture was carried out with cruel methods. Party and Komsomol authorities together with the police used repression. As a rule, ideological diversions of imperialism and insufficient level of ideological and political upbringing of youth were recognized as the reasons for the existence of all subcultures. Thus, in 1981, the first deputy chairman of the USSR KGB Semyon Cvigun noted that imperialist intelligence agencies and anti-Soviet centres were seeking new, sophisticated methods of influencing different categories of youth. They made attempts to form groups of young people based on their love of pop music and a Western way of life (Cvigun S., 1981, p. 98–99).

Political leaders in 1982 created a system of counter-propaganda work in Ukraine in order to strengthen ideological and educational work among the population and to withstand foreign influence. A specific group was to analyze foreign policy information and prepare appropriate recommendations in relation to counter-propaganda methods (Letter to the Central Committee, 1983, p. 16–21). On October 25, 1982, the Central Committee of the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* passed the Decree “On additional measures for improving ideological and political education of vocational schools students” because of proliferation of negative features in their activities as well as the fact that they actively participated in destructive subculture associations (Reference, detailed notes, 1983, p. 43).

Intensification of the struggle with youth associations began in 1982 when Yu. Andropov, former head of KGB, became General Secretary of the CPSU. His plan for “saving socialism” consisted in establishment of iron discipline, co-ordinated defeat of dissent and fight against crime in the country (Yakovlev A., 2000, p. 10). They began fighting against all non-controlled associations. Various methods were used: police expelled

participants of youth hangouts, carried out pogroms at unofficial rock concerts and illegal detentions. This led to the radicalization of those unions that had survived. It has especially affected rock music. There was a politicization of their songs; Samizdat emerged and illegal apartment concerts took place. In this regard, the Russian researcher Aleksandr Shubin noted that Yuriy Andropov defeated the dissidents and turned a large part of musicians into dissidents (Shubin A., 2001, p. 571).

The efforts of the government had certain results. From 1982–1983, the phase of decline of subcultures began. But at the same time in the youth environment such a radical-extremist subculture as fascist groups appeared. They were formed in 1984–1987 in most regions of the republic. Fascist groups were formed in Russia in the late 1970s – early 1980s. They even held a few rallies in the centre of Moscow (Shubin A., 2001, p. 370). Young people were interested in fascist ideas because of disappointment with the ideas of socialism imposed by the state. This led to the search for new ideas that a certain part of the youth found in Nazism. Great impression on young people was caused by its external attributes, paramilitary nature of the organization, impudence and cruelty.

Mikhail Malyutin rather convincingly explains the spread of fascist ideology among young people: Nazism in the USSR derives from certain socio-psychological features of subculture. If one of its characteristics is to stand out from the environment by means of shocking values and behaviour, then some teens choose the most shocking symbol, for example, the swastika (Malyutin M., 1988, p. 218). The popularity of fascist symbols in the youth environment may also be explained through the subconscious. Some scholars, in particular Vilgelm Rajh, acknowledge that the swastika influences on unconscious emotions of a person that contributed to successful propaganda of fascist ideas (Rajh V., 1997, p. 120).

Some scholars believe that the activities of pro-fascist groups can be described as “political hooliganism”: drawing of fascist symbols, wearing clothes with their depiction and the imitation of pro-fascist movements abroad. In their opinion, teenagers did not really understand fascist ideas (Razumkov A. and Khodakovskiy S., 1989, p. 18). We can partly agree with this point of view. There were groups of young people, mostly younger teens, who were not engaged in any practical activities. Their fascination with the Nazi ideology was just a game for them. However, for the rest of the Nazi groups, consisting of more mature young people, it was a conscious position – to oppose themselves to the existing system. Similar groups did not have an ideology and propagated their own often not Nazi ideas. Their postulates were: the use of extreme forms of violence, ruthlessness and hatred of enemies. The image of the enemy was different. They

could be teens who recently moved to the area, elderly people who were considered to be “parasites that took place in life away from young people” (Tarabukin Yu., 2001, p. 291). Some Nazis brutalized other nationalities. They believed that there were a “master race” and “inferior race”. The majority of the “inferior race” was to wipe out and others turn into slaves (Gromov A. and Kuzin O., 1990, p. 38). In the fight against “enemies” often destructive methods were used: from petty hooliganism to crimes.

The group “second echelon” (Simferopol, 1984) was a striking example of the destructiveness of the Nazi groups. Their goal was to overthrow Soviet power and establish a fascist regime. In order to achieve the goal it was necessary to spread their influence on young people who could help Nazis to gain power as it happened in Germany. As it became known later, the representatives of the association not only spread the fascist ideology but also beat and raped women. Only three years later a criminal case was initiated against the perpetrators of crimes (Savchenko V., 1987), p. 4, 9). Particular cruel were the members of a similar group in Voroshilovgrad. They “imitated” the execution of girls – “participants of the Chervonodon underground organisation” (Razumkov A. and Khodakovskiy S., 1989, p. 18).

Fascist youth groups in the Soviet period were a destructive youth initiative. However, they cannot be considered politicized organizations rather a kind of subculture because their ideological component was not dominant and they did not conduct theoretical and practical political activities. Due to the fact that the existence of these youth groups in Soviet society was not recognized for a long time and this topic was prohibited, there were no effective measures and legal basis for struggle against these extremist groups. This, in particular, contributed to the proliferation of fascist ideology in subsequent years also.

Conclusions

Forms of youth protest against the existing system were borrowed from the youth counter-cultural movements of Western Europe and the United States and combined with the original protest of Soviet youth. This led to the formation of authentic Soviet youth subculture which combined the ideas of passive opposition, absenteeism, demonstrative and expressive protest, destructive behaviour. In 1983–1984, due to repressions against subcultures a significant part of them ceased to exist and the rest were illegal. But fascist groups, a destructive-extremist form of youth initiative, emerged and musical associations became radical.

Soviet ban on political and social opposition led to a combination of cultural and socio-political protests in youth associations. The analysis of their activities gives grounds to state that in the 1950s and 1980s there was a form of latent opposition to authoritarian regimes as a youth sub-cultural opposition. The essence of this phenomenon is a synthesis of original socio-political ideas, views, forms of practical activity inherent in youth culture and directed against dominant ideas in society, political system in general or its elements. Both active and passive forms of protest against the regime were typical for this phenomenon.

SUBKULTURY MŁODZIEŻOWE JAKO FORMA PROTESTU WOBEC REŻIMU AUTORYTARNEGO (NA PRZYKŁADZIE UKRAINY RADZIECKIEJ W LATACH 1950–1980)

(STRESZCZENIE)

W artykule poddano analizie przyczyny pojawienia się subkultury młodzieżowej na Ukrainie w latach pięćdziesiątych XX w. Zbadano główne typy stowarzyszeń subkulturowych, ideologiczne pozycje ich członków i cechy aktywności. Autorka ukazuje ewolucję subkultury młodzieżowej w zależności od charakteru zmian społeczno-politycznych w kraju oraz analizuje główne sposoby walki władzy przeciwko subkulturom młodzieżowym.

YOUTH SUBCULTURES AS A FORM OF PROTEST TO AUTHORITARIAN REGIME (ON THE EXAMPLE OF SOVIET UKRAINE IN THE 1950S–1980S)

(SUMMARY)

The reasons for the emergence of a youth subculture in Ukraine in the 1950s are analyzed in the article. The main types of subcultures, their ideology and features of activity are studied. The author shows the evolution of the youth subculture depending on socio-political changes in the country and analyzes the main ways of authority fighting against youth subcultures.

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