

“I Felt Frightened and Then I Started Singing”: Songs at Russian Protest Actions

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Abstract

This article explores the role of songs in Russian protests. Data are drawn from ethnographic observations made at protests held between 2015 and 2022, mostly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as part of the project, “Monitoring Contemporary Folklore,” based at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. The authors consider materials from 240 protests. Viewing protests as an act of communication, the article analyzes the circumstances for song performances and suggests a hypothesis for songs’ communicative goals. The article additionally demonstrates how song choice changes from common 1980’s protest songs to new tracks that gained later popularity. The article demonstrates how song production depends on the types of protests and the levels of participant engagement.

Introduction

On 15 March 2014, the day before the referendum that marked the annexation of Crimea, protestors sang the song, “Take me Through the Maidan,” written in the 1980s by the bard musician Sergey Nikitin based on lyrics by the Ukrainian writer Vitaly Korotich. People sang with posters in the background which said, “Take me through the MAIDAN” and “No war,” Ukrainian and Russian flags, and yellow and blue balloons. The word “maidan” became an index of the Ukrainian revolution which was seen by many protestors as a hope for changes in Russia itself. Many people were angry at the annexation of Crimea, but there was also a feeling of expectation that day. It was the biggest protest action Moscow had seen in years. The so-called, “Snow Revolution,” which had been the beginning of the protest movement in Russia in the 2010s, was in the past. Regular protest actions, both small and large, allowed and not, all dispersed with varying degrees of severity and were episodically covered in the media.

On 13 March 2022, one of us went to observe an anti-war action in Moscow, which was supposed to be on Manejnaya Square. The square was cordoned off by riot police, and there were police officers on adjacent streets. Many citizens were there too, but it wasn’t clear who were protestors and who were only passersby. There was no singing, words, or signs. In March 2022, after laws were passed that

set punishments for making statements against the Russian Armed Forces and calling for sanctions, the era of street protests in Russia came to an end. Protests had begun in December 2011, when Russians engaged in mass street protests that demanded a revision of the elections to the State Duma. Protestors' demands were not met, but because of the rallies in 2011–2012 a culture of street protest developed that lasted until the spring of 2022 [Arkhipova and Alekseevsky 2014].

This article asks what the Russian public resistance of the 2010s was like and how did it evolve and answers through attention to what protestors listened to and sang and when they did it. We argue that in addition to being simply entertainment or filling time before or after rallies, protestors used specific music to regain a sense of human dignity and agency, to overcome their fear of riot police, and make original political statements.

Study Data, Methodology, and Design

Šmidchens [2014] writes about the importance of singing during protests in the Soviet Baltic republics in the 1980s. However, most researchers argue that song has not played as central a role in other post-USSR street protests. First, it is not common in Russia to write songs soon after events [Shenkman 2020]. (1) In addition, it is also not common to sing during protests, either from the stage or spontaneously [Sapronova et al. 2019, Shulman 2021]. From our experience observing the protests of the late 2010s, we also did not often hear songs. However, there was some singing at almost every large-scale event in Moscow or St. Petersburg during the 2021 protests. Both researchers and journalists noticed this change in favor of the musical components of protests that year [Shenkman 2021]. The shift toward song in protests changed into total silence after the previously mentioned legislation. Now, protestors are threatened with criminal penalties in addition to administrative terms. 27 February 2022 was the last action during which we recorded fixed songs.

The materials for this study were collected through participant observation and interviews during events as well as later in-depth interviews with the authors, performers, and audiences of the songs. This article draws on material collected by two projects of the Institute of Social Sciences of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration: “Monitoring Contemporary Folklore” (MCF) and “Strategies of Generating and Perceiving Poetic Texts in Rural and Urban Cultures.”

In the fall of 2014, Alexandra Arkhipova organized the MCF research group, which united specialists including sociologists and folklorists, some of whom had been at protest actions as citizens. One of the main goals of the group was to monitor public protest activity. Since 2015, the group, including the authors of this article, has been systematically observing Russian public protests. We have attempted to attend all public street events, from large-scale rallies to one-man protests, regardless of their agenda, e.g., political, societal, or environmental. We monitored media and social media for announced events. During the events, we took pictures of posters and recorded interviews with participants. It is during the

context of this work that we have made our observations on the songs. (2) When creating the MCF group, we wanted to understand the grassroots reactions to socially significant events, so we tried to look at street politics “from the inside” and listen to the voices of both ordinary participants and protest leaders. Overall, the MCF group has observed more than 400 street events across twelve cities, with the majority being in Moscow and St. Petersburg between January 2015 and March 2022. We have not only observed protests, but also street rallies in support of the current government. However, in this article we only discuss opposition rallies.

We divide protest actions primarily into two main groups: 1) approved protest events, and 2) unapproved protest events. As for the forms of these events, we classify them into a) marches, b) rallies, and c) one-man protests. (3) To conduct a public street action, organizers must coordinate with the administration of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation. Practically, there were often situations when permission to hold an event was not given, but organizers still urged people to go to specified places at specified times. These non-approved rallies were different than approved ones: they did not have a stage and equipment and had a high risk of arrest. For the purposes of this study, we only analyze materials from 240 events (4) that our research group observed in Moscow (fifty-seven events), St. Petersburg (177 events), and one rally each in Volokolamsk, Vologda, Kazan, Chelyabinsk, Novosibirsk, and Tomsk between July 2015 and March 2022 (for an explicit classification of street actions, see Table 1).

Using the results of our observations, we correlate singing situations with different types of songs, actions, and protestors’ interviews. We rely on Erving Goffman’s frame analysis [2004] and his concept of social dramaturgy [2000] to understand the reasons protestors sing certain songs in certain situations. Another important criterion for analyzing songs during protests is the difference between presentation and participation as principles of performance, as defined by Thomas Turino [2008]. Participative style means that songs have no performer or audience, but rather only actual or potential participants. Presentational style is defined as one group of people performing for another group who listens and watches [Turino 2008]. Turino stresses that music has an impact on emotions and identities which are “at once individual and social” and connected with life experience [1999: 221]. He uses Peircian semiotic theory to reveal different ways that music works. The interpretation of a sign depends on “the social frame defining the type of interaction” as well as the manner of singing, visual codes, and the body language of participants [Turino 1999: 237].

Turino’s two styles correspond to Goffman’s different types of interaction. The participative style can exist in an intra-group communication when everyone is part of a single group. The presentational style implies two groups—performers and listeners. In some cases, protests included protestors and sympathetic listeners as two different groups, in other cases all protestors were one group against the police. Next, we will show how changes in the framework of rallies, which occurred because of tightened political constraints, made singing more participatory.

Protest Song: When and How?

We documented singing during seventy-two anti-government protest events, which totaled thirty percent of all the events that we observed. In fifteen cases, participants only listened to songs through speakers. (5) For the remaining fifty-seven cases, twelve events included singing from the stage by invited artists. In the remaining cases (as well as twice after the events with “staged” singing), groups of attendees (if not all) sang in chorus and were joined by other groups. Singing may have been planned (e.g., when the organizers called upon everyone to sing, handing around printed lyrics) or spontaneous (e.g., when some attendees suddenly started singing during the event). The correlation of types of street actions with singing formats is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 (6)

	Form of the action	Total number	Recorded music broadcast	Singing from the stage	Organized choral singing	Spontaneous singing
1. Approved mass opposition	March	13	3	-	4	1
	Rally	72	18	12	4	7
2. Unapproved mass opposition	March	35	3	-	3	16
	Rally	28	2	-	1	6
	single pickets	92	2	-	-	3

Different modes of musical accompaniment illustrate some of the features of different modes of participation. At approved events, performances are mostly presentational in Turino’s terms. However, unlike pro-government events where only presentational styles remained possible, sometimes there was also participatory singing at approved events. At unapproved protest actions, on the contrary, performances were exclusively participatory in Turino’s terms, even as events might have still been organized. Musical accompaniment included: 1) amplified music, 2) singing from a stage, 3) organized choral singing, and 4) spontaneous singing. Listening to amplified songs corresponded to minimal involvement for participants. Organizers selected songs that meshed with their agendas; music created more of an atmosphere than made a statement. When singing from the stage, musicians’ performances were more akin to speeches, with participants remaining primarily passive recipients. With organized collective singing, the level of participation increased. Protestors were no longer merely listeners but were also participants in the speech acts themselves. In the case of spontaneous actions, participants became not only the subjects of the speech acts, but also their creators.

As we see in Table 1, recorded music (from the equipment) was mostly used at approved rallies, where it usually was played before speeches began. An article

about a Moscow protest in defense of the social media platform Telegram on 30 April 2018 noted (7), “songs by *Monetochka* (“*Mama Ia ne ziguiu*” [Mama I Don’t Say Heil]) and Yegor Letov (“*Ia ubil v sebe gosudarstvo*” [I Killed the State in Myself]) were played from the stage; people were singing along” [Gannenko 2018]. Sometimes music was played during approved marches by putting loudspeakers on top of cars that rode in front of columns of protestors, particularly at May Day events, which brought together both organized and non-organized opposition groups. (8)

On rare occasions, we observed music played with smartphones at unapproved processions and single pickets. (9) Although we have mentioned that merely listening to music corresponds to only minimal levels of involvement in the protest, music played with smartphones is different because both the songs and the time to play them were chosen by the protestors spontaneously. Usually, when a song was played from a smartphone, people not only listened to it but also sang along, at least to the chorus. In general, this fits into a more general trend where playback from devices was preferred to live performances. It is still acceptable to sing with instrumental accompaniment, most often guitar, but playback from devices has gained popularity: “The guitar, it is usually passed from singer to singer... and first-year guys, they didn’t play the guitar at all. They took out a loudspeaker, turned on music and went on listening. It was so weird to me” [male, born 1992, Moscow, May 2020]. Playback from devices changes the very essence of relationships between people and texts; there is no longer a need to know lyrics by heart. If someone likes a song, they can easily find it online to play on their smartphone.

However, technology has not yet replaced or canceled live singing at street actions. Artists often performed live from a stage as part of an organized main program. However, this was impossible at unapproved street actions because protestors were often driven off by the police. In cases of musicians performing from a stage, a performance often turned into a statement; the organizers usually invited those artists whose songs fit their agenda. For example, an environmental meeting in 2019 was attended by musicians whose songs were about fighting against the construction of a landfill at Shiyes: Artemiy Ulanov performed his song “*Malen’kii Shyes, bol’shaia strana*” [Little Shies, Big Country] and Anton Slon played his song “*Vagony s musorom*” [Cars of Waste] [Field report from “All-Russian Environmental Protest Day,” 22 September 2019, Udelyny Part, St. Petersburg]. (10) Amplified sound from loudspeakers creates a common information field, just like speeches do. Large meetings involving more than a thousand people usually had a center where people listen to speakers and music and a periphery where attendees preferred to talk to each other informally; while the former were likely to listen and maybe sing along, the latter could well ignore songs completely.

Greater involvement occurred with planned group singing. We have seen this format of singing at opposition rallies almost as many times as performances from the stage. We saw such singing at approved actions, both at marches and rallies. At approved marches, singing usually occurs in columns. For instance, at

a large march in Moscow dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Russian Red Army, a man with a guitar marched ahead of the “Left front” column and performed “*I vnov’ prodolzhaetsia boi*” [The Battle Goes On]. Other people sang along, but no other columns were singing, or, in some cases they had their own songs [Field report from the march dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Red Army, 23 February 2018, Moscow].

This format of singing was sometimes seen at unapproved events as well, but only at smaller ones that did not risk conflict with the police. It was that way on 8 March 2021; after their application had been rejected, about 250–300 participants decided to walk on sidewalks to avoid breaking traffic laws, without posters but singing songs from Kirochnaya Street to Nevsky Avenue [Field Report from the unapproved action “Walking and Protesting for Women’s Rights,” 8 March 2021, St. Petersburg]. The organizers made a list of songs beforehand and only had to hand them out on printed papers. In these situations, singing went beyond being a mere individual statement and became a collective statement. The songs were thus a part of the agenda, intended to unify the participants. Organized choral singing was an example of the participatory mode of performance and the greater involvement of ordinary participants, even as the choice of songs was still determined by the organizers.

The maximum degree of participant involvement appears in cases of spontaneous singing, which was a characteristic primarily of unapproved street actions. We observed thirty-three cases when a participant unexpectedly began to sing a song and other participants picked it up. In this case, singing could be accompanied by guitar, a song played on a smartphone, or without any musical accompaniment at all.

For example, Alexei Navalny (11) held unapproved rallies against corruption on the Day of Russia in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other large cities on 12 June 2017. MCF observers noticed the following at the Tverskaya protest:

Пение “Ла-ла-ла, Богородица, Путина прогони” (не подпевали, но смеялись одобрительно), дудение в утиный манок, пение гимна России, попытка петь “Стены”, включение “Перемен” с телефона, пение песен под гитару: “про Ходорковского, что в России всем на все пофиг” и “гуси-гуси, га-га-га.”

[Singing “La La La, Holy Virgin Put Putin Away” (not sung to, but there were supporting laughs), using duck calls, singing the national anthem, trying to sing “*Steny*” [Walls], (12) playing “*Peremen*” [Changes] (13) on phones, singing “about Khodorkovsky, and that no one gives a shit in Russia,” accompanied by guitar, and a nursery rhyme about gees.] [Field Report from the unapproved action “We Demand Answers,” 12 June 2017, Moscow]

Meanwhile, police suppressed protestors at another unapproved event at Mars Field in St. Petersburg. At one moment, a group of young people gathered near

the memorial and sang “*Peremen.*” At the end of the rally, the ones who remained after many hours of arrests gathered and sang Russia’s national anthem [Field Report from the unapproved action “We Demand Answers,” 12 June 2017, St. Petersburg].

In 2021, spontaneous singing frequently accompanied mass protests. 2021 in Russia began with Navalny’s return and his subsequent arrest. His arrest sparked massive street protests across the country. Rallies and marches in support of Navalny took place from January to April 2021 [Arkhipova et al. 2021]. Here is one field report from the protests:

Впереди дорога оказалась перегорожена ОМОНОм, начались задержания, все побежали назад, стало понятно, что мы в окружении, но утешало, что нас там было около тысячи человек и всех задержать было бы проблемно. В итоге как-то собрались, повернули на Большую Конюшенную. Снова начали кричать кричалки и хлопать. Несколько парней запели “Всё идет по плану”, песню подхватили и с песней мы шли в сторону Невского проспекта [...] У Казанского собора снова начались задержания, мы перебежали через Невский проспект, у дома книги кто-то включил на телефоне пению IC3PEAK “Смерти больше нет” — молодежь стала подпевать припев, танцевать и хлопать в ладоши.

[The way ahead was blocked by riot police, they started arresting people, everyone ran back and soon we understood we were encircled. The good news was that we numbered more than a thousand, and they wouldn’t be able to catch everyone. In the long run, we managed to gather and turned to Bolshaya Konyushennaya, starting to shout and clap again. Some guys started singing “*Vcë idët po planu*” [All Is Going According to Plan] (14), others followed, and so we went toward Nevsky, singing together. [...] Next to Kazan Cathedral, there were arrests again. We crossed Nevsky, and when we reached the central bookstore, someone put IC3PEAK’s “*Smerti bol’she net*” [Death No More] (15) on their phone, the guys sang along with the chorus, danced, clapped their hands.] [Field Report from unapproved march against Navalny’s arrest, 23 January 2021, St. Petersburg]

In this case, we see how involved participants became in the protests. Not only did they sing together, but they also chose what and when to sing. The protest itself was completely participative as well; there were no performers and no audience. As a result, everyone, whether singing or not, was perceived by passersby and police as part of the unapproved march, gathering and singing in breach of the law.

In this section, we have shown different types of singing, each of which shows different modes of involvement and participation in protest. The ability of organizers to turn on equipment and invite professional musicians decreased

every year after 2015 and eventually disappeared by 2020. It caused the development of participatory singing and, accordingly, a higher involvement of participants in protest actions.

Songs Sung During Protests

Table 2 details the seven most popular protest songs that we observed over a decade of fieldwork and the performance modes in which we observed them. The four songs that were most popular at Russian street protests were “*Peremen*” by the band *Kino* [Movies] (16), “*Steny*” by the band *Arkady Kots* (17), “The Internationale” (18), and the official anthem of the Russian Federation. All these songs were performed from seven to twelve times during the events, and we have heard them at protests repeatedly over the years. These four songs are very different in content, style, and meaning in Russian culture. We will discuss each one in turn.

Table 2

	Music from equipment	Singing from the stage	Organized choral singing	Spontaneous singing
“ <i>Peremen</i> ” [Changes]	7	-	-	11
“ <i>Steny</i> ” [Walls]	-	1	6	5
“The Internationale”	1	1	4	1
Russian national anthem	-	-	-	7
“ <i>Eto proidet</i> ” [This Will Pass]	1	-	-	4
“ <i>Vcĕ idĕt po planu</i> ” [All Is Going According to Plan]	-	-	-	4
“ <i>Smerti bol’she net</i> ” [Death No More]	-	1	-	2

“*Peremen*” was written by Viktor Tsoi, the frontman for *Kino*, in 1986 and was included in the soundtrack of Sergey Solovyov’s movie *Assa* in 1987. The

secret of *Peremen*’s popularity lies perhaps in its historical context above all. This song anticipated *perestroika*, the fall of the USSR, and the dawn of a new country. Tsoi himself said that the song was not political, but it nevertheless became the anthem of *perestroika* for many people. In terms of genre, it is usually defined as “Russian rock,” a style that was common for protest music in the late 1980s. The song has not lost its popularity; it was used in the soundtracks to modern films *Dust* (2005) and *Major Grom: Plague Doctor* (2021) and has resulted in quite a few cover versions by later Russian artists. It was played from acoustic systems as the opening or closing theme to protests up to 2019, during unofficial marches in 2019 and 2021, and from cars. All eleven times mentioned in the table it was sung spontaneously. “*Peremen*” is special because it isn’t specific to one age group; older people know it from their youth and young people know it because of its continued popularity.

“*Steny*” is the second most popular song and even more frequently sung live. According to MCF records, it has been sung twelve times at rallies. The original version was written in 1968 in Catalan by Lluís Llach and later translated into Russian by Kirill Medvedev in 2011. Since then, the Russian version has been performed by the band *Arkady Kots*, sometimes live from the stage during protest events. Unlike “*Peremen*,” “*Steny*” is mostly popular among political activists. It is often performed at left-wing events and feminist protests. In 2019–2020, it also became the anthem of environmentalists protesting a dump in Shies [Kozlova 2020]. “*Peremen*” and “*Steny*” are indexes of Russian peoples’ protests, and, perhaps, the songs’ popularity was one of the reasons for their singing: when you try to unite people, you should sing something familiar to them and have a clear, traditional message.

The third and fourth most popular songs are “The Internationale” and the anthem of the Russian Federation. “The Internationale” was once the official anthem of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (from 1918 on) and then of the USSR (from 1922 to 1944). It was usually sung in a version corresponding to the former national hymn, mostly at events that coincided with “Soviet” dates, like 1 May, 7 November, or 23 February. In the 2010s, such events united both organized and sporadic left-wing opposition groups. “The Internationale” is popular among people of various ages but is mainly a leftist song, associated with groups aligned with the USSR (19) and the “New Left.” (20)

We have only heard the official anthem of the Russian Federation played at events organized by the Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF) and performed mostly by young people, aged below twenty-five to thirty. While singing it, protestors on 23 January 2021 also led a round dance “*Karavay*” [Loaf] around a snowman. The original words of the dance-play which is common for the children’s holidays are “Каравай, каравай / Кого любишь выбирай” [Loaf, loaf / Choose whom you love]. At the center of the circle there was a snowman. The crown on his head, the money and red paint symbolizing blood in his mouth, his small eyes and a triangular nose indicated that the snowman was an icon of Putin. Thus, their singing of the anthem was only ironic [Field Report from unapproved march against Navalny’s arrest, 23 January 2021, Moscow].

Turino offers the example of Jimi Hendrix’s Woodstock performance of the US national anthem in terms of how a song can create indexes: “The anthem (indexically associated with nationalistic contexts) creates a new meaning specifically within the broader social context” [1999: 242]. Associations with the Vietnam War through the images of bomb sounds included the song in anti-war protests. In our case, protest actions have not inverted the meaning of the anthem totally, but still have given it some extra semantic range, such as the impossibility of choice, the transformation of citizens into children, and the president into a bloody idol.

In an interview conducted in 2022, (21) one protestor spoke about the singing of the anthem during an April 2021 pro-Navalny rally in Chita:

мы пели гимн [...] Ну, к тому же сложно арестовать людей, которые поют гимн, мы так посчитали. Это было бы слишком абсурдно на тот момент. Сейчас уже ничего не абсурдно. [Помогло?] Да, нас никто не задержал. Хотя там какой-то полицейский говорил: “Бы какой-то флешмоб организовали, это там что-то нарушает”. Ну, никого не задерживали. Ну, по крайней мере у меня на глазах.

[We have sung the anthem [...] And, besides, it is difficult to arrest people, who are singing the anthem, as we considered. It would be too absurd for that moment. Nowadays, nothing is too absurd... [Did it help?] Yes, none of us was arrested. Although a policemen said: “Gee, what a flash mob you have organized, it offends something”. So, no one was arrested. At least, I haven’t seen.”] [male, born 1996, St. Petersburg, 16 April 2022]

The interviewee remarks on all official symbols such as the anthem and flag “такого оттенка не имели в апреле прошлого года” [they haven’t that shade on the April last year]. During the spring of 2022, all state official symbols were discredited by war, and the singing of the anthem was introduced in some schools as an element of patriotic education and thus could no longer be used by protestors in any context.

At the same time, in our interviews with protestors during 2022, the singing of the Ukrainian anthem was mentioned at least twice:

По-моему, пели еще гимн “Ще не вмерла Україна”, гимн пели точно, неоднократно, 24-го пели.

[To my mind, they also sang the hymn “Ukraine has not yet died,” they sang the anthem accurately, repeatedly, they sang it on the 24th.] [male, born 1991, St. Petersburg, 8 April 2022]

здесь уже люди пели гимн Украины. Я, насколько мог, подпевал, надо доучить слова. Но, в целом, люди пели “Ще не вмерла

Украина”, там пели люди из украинской диаспоры и не только, я видел своих знакомых российских активистов, они тоже пели.

[Here already people sang the national anthem of Ukraine. I sang along as best I could, I need to finish learning the words. But, in general, people sang “Ukraine has not yet died,” people from the Ukrainian diaspora and not only sang there, I saw my acquaintances from Russian activists, they also sang.] [male, born 1998, Yerevan, 31 March 2022]

We would like to underline the fact that people had to specially learn the words to the Ukrainian anthem.

Apart from these four songs, our observers also heard other songs more than once. Those songs can be classified into several categories: Soviet-era songs, author (bard) songs, rock songs, and new songs written in the last few years. Soviet-era songs as well as the author (bard) songs (22) were mainly sung by elderly people. Left-wing parties used Soviet-era songs to express nostalgia for the USSR. For example, we often heard them at marches against raising the retirement age in 2018. Author songs were sung by the same aged people who listened to Soviet-era songs but who had more liberal (formerly anti-Soviet) views and were usually found at small-scale events related to architectural activists or memorials. For example, we heard them at Boris Nemtsov’s (23) and Anna Politkovskaya’s (24) memorial events. In recent years, when there were no longer approved actions and the risk of arrest at small uncoordinated actions increased, the singing of author songs stopped.

Rock is the most common genre played or sung at protests. Russian rock from the 1980s is most often the music of forty-somethings, the demographic who constitute the base of today’s democratic opposition or at least those groups that manage to have their events approved. This music was inherited by young people in contrast to earlier generations’ preference for Soviet and author’s songs. One key rock song was “*Vcě idět po planu*” [All is Going According to Plan] written by Yegor Letov, frontman of the group *Grazhdanskaia Oborona* [Civil Defense] between 1986 and 1988. Like *Kino*, *Grazhdanskaia Oborona* was a Russian rock band with a punk sensibility. Although “*Vcě idět po planu*” is more than thirty years old, it is usually sung by younger people. For instance, in 2021, while one of us was teaching high school, students aged seventeen to eighteen years old chose to add Civil Defense to their poetry-class curriculum. Other songs frequently played were those of Yuri Shevchuk of DDT.

It is worth mentioning that a new protest punk rock genre was being developed in the 2020s, represented by the band *Pornofilmy* [Porn movies] (25). Their song, “*Eto proidet*” [It Will Pass], was another hit at today’s street protests. The song was composed during protests against the non-admission of independents in the elections of the Moscow City *Duma*. The song features police brutality during mass protests, mentions Siberian forests that were on fire at that time, and references the war in Eastern Ukraine and a landmark 2019 politically motivated legal case against the journalist Ivan Golunov. We observed young

people singing this song during unapproved mass gatherings in both 2020 and 2021. It was also played from a phone during an anti-war demonstration on 27 February 2022 in St. Petersburg.

One additional song popular among protestors was “*Smerti bol'she net*” [Death is No More] by IC3PEAK. IC3PEAK, founded in 2013, plays experimental electronic music. Written in 2018, and the band performed the song on stage during an approved rally against the banning of independent candidates for elections on 10 August 2019. We also subsequently heard young people perform it during the 2021 pro-Navalny events.

In addition to participant observation, we also interviewed participants about the songs that they sang during protests. During interviews on 21 April 2021 (26), we asked two questions: which songs do participants associate with today’s protests, and which songs have they themselves heard at events. The results were surprising. Although “*Peremen*” was the most common response (thirteen people had heard it, and twenty-two people associated it with protests) the only other songs that people mentioned were “*Eto proidet*” and “*Smerti bol'she net*.” “*Eto proidet*” was familiar to three respondents, while five said that they associated this or other songs by *Pornofilmy* with protests. Two respondents had heard “*Smerti bol'she net*,” and five associated it with protest. Some other songs were also mentioned: Gudkov’s “*Akvadiskoteka*” [Aquatic Disco], composed in 2021 and inspired by Navalny’s investigations, “*Vsë kak u liudei*” [All the Proper Way] by rapper Noize MC (2019), and “*Vykhodi guliat' so mnoi*” [Come Walk with Me] by the rap group *Kasta* (2019).

“*Peremen*” attracts protestors because of its universality and relevant historical and cultural contexts. The songwriter never spoke explicitly about his political views, which allowed protestors to interpret its meaning broadly: “Ну, обычно в любой непонятной ситуации на любом митинге, неважно левый, правый—все поют песню «*Перемени*»” [Actually, “*Peremen*” is sung by anyone, at any rally, no matter if right or left] [female, born 1999, Moscow, 21 April 2021]. Because the song lacks specific historical or political references, the perspectives of protestors demanding change fit the song well. One respondent said, “Я считаю, что это вообще гимн сегодняшнего времени” [I think it’s actually the anthem of our day] [female, born 1978, Moscow, 21 April 2021].

Newer songs brought more variety to the Russian street protest soundtrack in 2021. Sometimes respondents even said that they had learned new protest songs at the events themselves: “В прошлый раз, когда я была, включали люди музыку из машин, и я познакомилась с прекрасной песней группы *Порнофильмы*, которая называется «*Это пройдет*», вот, узнала о новом треке с протестной акции” [Last time I attended one, there were people putting music on from their cars. That was how I heard a great song by *Pornofilmy*, called “*Eto proidet*.” So, I learned a new song at a protest event] [female, born 1993, Moscow, 21 April 2021].

Still, respondents mostly said that they learned about new songs (and old ones as well) from social media:

[Может, у вас есть какие-то песни, которые ассоциируются с зимними митингами?] Я думаю, что это соцсети популяризировали... Я слышала в TikTok, в Instagram “Перемен”, ICЗРЕАК тоже какая-то песня была... [подруга подсказывает] — “Пусть все горит”.

[[Perhaps you could name some songs that you associate with this winter’s events?] I think they became mainstream from social media [...] I’ve heard “*Peremen*” on TikTok and on Instagram, also some song by ICЗРЕАК [A friend adds “Let It All Burn” (27)].] [female, born 2001, Moscow, 21 April 2021]

It was thus largely due to technology (music on phones or the internet, for example) that new protest songs appeared at rallies.

Sometimes informants knew songs but not the artists of the songs, saying they heard the songs online as tracks that accompanied information about the protests:

[А слышали какие-нибудь песни сегодня?] Да, я слышал пару песен группы “Порнофильмы” и “Пусть все горит”. [Я тоже ее слышала. Это, новая для меня песня “Пусть все горит”, кто ее поет?] Я не знаю точно исполнителя, но в различных социальных сетях под эту песню как раз проходили массовые сборы, призывы к тому, чтобы выйти.

[[Have you heard any songs today?] Yes, I heard a couple of songs by *Pornofilmy* and “Let It Burn.” [Oh yes, I’ve heard it too. This song, “Let It Burn,” is totally new to me, who’s the artist?] I don’t know exactly, but this song has been used on social media to organize mass meetings, accompanying calls to going out to protest.] [male, born 2002, St. Petersburg, 23 January 2021]

The fact that a song accompanied a protest made it become more important to the public than simply knowing its lyricist or performer alone. Social networks, in 2021 primarily Tik-Tok, and mobile phones for accompaniment and reading texts during street actions made it possible for new protest songs to appear. As a result, new songs competed with classics, but whether any of them will equal the popularity of “*Peremen*” still remains to be seen.

In 2022, we conducted fifteen additional interviews. In addition to the songs named earlier, interviewees also mentioned the Ukrainian national anthem and the children’s song “*Pust’ vseгда budet solnce*” [May There Always Be Sunshine]. We wrote about the Ukrainian national anthem above. As for the children’s song, its appeal is in its pacifist message, which anti-war protestors turned into political slogan. We also observed other times when protestors used children’s songs or spoke about them in interviews. For example, in 2021 protestors used a song from

the cartoon *Bremenskie muzykanty* [The Bremen Town Musicians] called “*Nichego na svete luchshe netu,*” [There is nothing better in the world] associating the songs’ lyrics “Нам дворцов заманчивые своды / Не заменят никогда свободы” [The tempting vaults of the palaces / Will never replace freedom for us] with Putin’s palace, which Navalny showed in his investigation on the eve of the protest. We will now turn to protestors’ motivations for singing or playing music at protest actions.

Motivations for Songs and Singing at Protests

The question of the communicative objective of music and songs during protests raises a few methodological questions. During interviews, participants answer without realizing their objectives or veil them retrospectively; meanwhile, during protests themselves we can only understand the way that singing correlates with specific situations, not draw any cause-effect links. Although we realize these limitations, we can still generalize some of the purposes of song and singing in protests, both conscious and unconscious ones.

Songs and singing do not just express protestors’ identity or position, which is relevant at a symbolic level and connected with the songs’ texts (Turino calls this “thirdness”), but songs and singing also mark the space of an action, fill the event time, and help protestors not to focus on their own fear, which connects to emotions (what Turino calls “firstness”) and indices: for example, “*Peremen*” refers to *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, and “*Steny*” refers to the fight against Franco’s dictatorship (“secondness”) [Turino 1999].

In everyday life, singing can fill idle time. People sing or recite to themselves during long journeys, when they cannot fall asleep, or are in a hospital, for instance [Yugay 2000]. At approved protest events, songs are also played at the beginning and end to fill downtime as people arrive and leave. This same function is demonstrated by singing during one-person protest “queues,” when time is not filled by a defined program. Songs also perform a similar function at pro-government rallies. During unapproved events, people sometimes turn on music or sing while waiting:

Дошли до Банковского моста, стали переходить через него, так как мостик узкий, в людей было очень много, получилась пешеходная пробка. Кто-то включил на телефоне “Перемен”, следом включило еще несколько человек, остальные стали хором подпевать — так пока стояли спели всю песню от начала до конца.

[We reached Bankovsky Bridge and started to cross it. Since it’s a narrow bridge and there were quite a lot of people, there was sort of a pedestrian jam. Someone began playing “*Peremen*” on their smartphone, several persons followed suit, the rest started singing along; so while being in this jam, we sang the entire song from beginning to end.] [Field

Report from an unapproved protest against Navalny’s arrest, 31 January 2021, St. Petersburg]

However, in unplanned acts, even the message of “filler” music becomes important. People standing on the bridge, for example, are at risk of being arrested by police and singing increases that risk.

When artists play from the stage at approved events, music was simultaneously a statement about the agenda of the protest itself and entertainment, allowing for a break between more serious speeches and intended to set the mood. In pro-government actions, entertainment was the main function of songs. Most often, famous pop singers performed from the stage, and their songs were not related to any agenda. At approved opposition rallies, organizers selected songs based on their messages, but this too did not negate their simultaneous function as entertainment. For example, one of the organizers of an event in a small town told us why he believed it was important to invite artists to play during mass meetings:

Как считали у нас коммунисты (КПРФ), что митинг — это дело серьезное, вроде там надо вещи озвучивать серьезные, а не какой-то концерт. Но мы потом их переубедили, почему “Архимеда” и позвали в тот момент, что все-таки надо такой момент делать, чтобы человек расслабился и потом дали информацию, опять же немножко расслабился и снова подали информацию. Поэтому митинги только в конце прошлого года пошли музыкально-говорильные, до этого были в основном говорильные.

[Our communists (the city cell of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation) believed that a rally was a serious thing with serious speeches, not a concert or something. But we managed to convince them and eventually invited Archimedes (28), because we understand that people also need some fun and relaxation before listening to serious stuff again. So, it was not until end of last year that mass meetings became composed of both music and talking, while it used to be just talking before.] [Artyom, born 1991, Syktyvkar, online interview recorded in May 2020]

Different people, mostly strangers to each other, came to street actions, both approved and unapproved, and their performance of song helped them feel like a team. Singing songs at protest actions often functioned similarly to singing on hikes, at youth camps, etc. It is no coincidence that the organizers of some street actions brought paper lyrics with them related to the agenda of the event. Organizers wanted to both entertain and unite participants, as they made a political statement. At those unapproved events that lacked organizers or speakers, participants themselves intuitively chose choral singing to express themselves and create that feeling of unity. Chants performed a similar function at street actions.

For example, at many unapproved marches in Moscow and St. Petersburg, we often heard the chant, “When we are united, we are invincible.” Interviewees mentioned songs’ unifying role: “мне кажется всякие присказки, кричалки и песни они здорово сплачивают людей” [I think that all those adages, chants and songs are great for bringing people together] [female, born 1996, St. Petersburg, 18 January 2021]. Musicians too similarly noted:

На улице, это коллективно все, тут задача не себя получше презентовать, а чтобы все вместе пели, все шумело, смысл для общей борьбы. Тут музыка имеет более практическое значение. Но это и хорошо [...] Это и развлечение одновременно, да, у тебя есть задача постараться сделать так, чтобы эта акция была повеселее.

[When you’re outside, you’re all together, you don’t need to look like a rock star, just to make everyone sing together, make some noise, fight together. Music has practical value here. And that’s okay [...] It’s for entertainment, too, ‘cause you have to make this event more fun.] [Kirill, born 1974, Moscow, interview June 2021]

Singing also helps participants overcome their fear:

[Есть ли какие-то песни, кроме приведенных примеров, которые показывают твоё отношение, если оно есть, к повестке современной?] Эта вот прекрасная “Перемен”, или “Стены”, да, это просто вот. Я помню я стояла на митинге в своем городе, мой город, это странное место, где на митинге товарищей в форме было больше, чем людей, которые вышли протестовать [...] И помню, как я стою и в одиночестве ору вот это вот “Стены” потому, что больше никто этот текст не знал. Да. И для меня это самый политический текст из возможных. Из тех, которые я знаю, наверное.

[“*Peremen*,” [is] an awesome [song], or “*Steny*,” these rock. I remember standing in a mass meeting in my town [Miass, Chelyabinsk Oblast], and my town is a weird place with more police than actual protestors coming to the event [...] And I can recall standing alone and yelling those “*Steny*,” all alone because no one else knew the lyrics. Yeah. This text is so very political to me. Of all the ones I know, I guess.] [female, born 2000, Moscow, April 2021]

Another young woman explained that she was very scared at the protests both for herself and her parents: “Вот какой-то, да, абсолютный страх. И в то же время я не чувствовала, что я могу стоять и молчать. У меня не было в руках плаката, я не смогла нарисовать плакат. Мне же нужно было что-то сказать, нужно было выразить то, что я чувствую. Поэтому я пела “Стены”” [There was some, yeah, absolute fear. But at the same time, I never felt I could just stand

there in silence. I had no poster, I couldn't come up with one. But I had to say something, let my feelings out. That's why I was singing “*Steny*” [female, born 2000, April 2021]. At a St. Petersburg rally on 21 April 2021, people started shouting “We are not afraid” and “We are the power here” and then began singing “*Eto proidet.*” [Field Report from the unapproved march “Medical Assistance for Navalny,” 21 April 2021, St. Petersburg]. Activists at an environmental camp on Shies sang “*Steny*” during clashes with representatives of security forces as well. (29) We found multiple mentions of choral singing during protests on social media, such as singing during protestors' detainment on buses that transported them to police stations. (30) Turino similarly noted that participants in protests in the United States in the 1960s talked about how they sang each time before going to demonstrations to bolster their courage [2008: 218].

The prevalence of a particular function, whether filling time, entertainment, making a political statement, uniting participants, and overcoming fear, largely depended on the type of action and the mode of singing. And, often each performance carried with it more than one function. At approved events, singing and listening to songs were more often used to fill time, entertain, or make a political statement. During unapproved events, song more likely served the functions of uniting and overcoming fear.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how there is no universal pattern for song performances at protest actions, even as there seems to be a set playlist, including “*Peremen,*” “*Steny,*” “The Internationale,” and “*Vcě idět po planu.*” Each song has its own history in the protest movement, and still other songs become protest songs, such as the Russian national anthem and certain Soviet-era and children's songs. Even so, the choice of song, the format of a protest action, and the mode of singing do not always correlate with each other. Songs might be played on equipment, performed from a stage, or sung collectively. They may be listened to passively as in the case of many approved actions or experienced as participatory singing as in many unapproved actions. The level of participation might grow depending on increases in risk. At those events where the most police violence occurs, unapproved mass actions, spontaneous collective singing is common.

Taken together, songs across all the protests that we observed had two larger functions. The first was simply as entertainment and scene setting for the protests' time and space. That is how organizers used music during approved protests with invited musicians or music played through equipment. However, riot police's actions similarly framed protests through cordoning off rallies and arresting individuals. Protestors' active programs increasingly became watching riot police and running away from them.

The second function of songs was for those people who found themselves in this situation. They used music to regain a sense of human dignity and agency, to overcome fear, and make original political statements. They did this through songs performed spontaneously or played from a cell phone. Singing, unlike a poster,

leaves no traces. It only needs a temporary gap for safety. Lately, at unapproved actions, songs became even more involved as participants themselves increasingly made their own expressions in addition to those of the organizers. People were looking for something that could unite them as a group, so they chose songs familiar to most attendees or something that expressed their individuality.

Our observations of the protest actions of February-March 2022 demonstrate that singing only helps to overcome protestors' fear and unify them as a group up to a certain point. In a contest between protestors and authorities, there comes a moment when it is unsafe, punishment increases, and no time remains to make a statement through song. At that point, singing cannot provide agency and human dignity, and therefore it disappears. On 13 March 2022, police in the center of Moscow outnumbered protestors, passersby, and tourists. Protestors were unable to form any kind of group, and posters, songs, and shouts ceased. The protest became numb and silent.

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NOTES

1 This article was written in 2021, and the statement was true then. After 24 February 2022, the situation changed. New songs with actual agendas were written in spring 2022. However, we will not discuss them in this article because they weren't mentioned in street protests. The reason is impersonal—the mass anti-war actions took place during the first two weeks of the war. The last of them was on 6 March. The songs appeared later.

2 For additional MCF scholarship on the anthropology of Russian protest, see [Arkhipova et al. 2017], [Arkhipova et al. 2018a], [Arkhipova et al. 2018b], and [Arkhipova et al. 2021].

3 Single pickets stand apart because they did not require a permit until April 2020. Marches and rallies imply large-scale involvement, from 100 to tens of thousands of people. Meanwhile, a one-man protest means that there is only one person participating; however, in effect, people come in small groups and hold their posters in turns. From April 2020, single pickets were forbidden because of Covid-19.

4 We were guided by two criteria in choosing street actions for this article. Firstly, the thematic (agenda)—we don’t consider non-political actions or actions in support of the current government. Secondly, the presence or absence of singing at an action.

5 There were thirteen events where, in addition to music from the speakers, participants also sang (in some cases from the stage, in others as spontaneous choral singing), so in total we heard music at twenty-eight protests.

6 The number of songs is greater than the number of street actions, because some actions may have more than one performance format.

7 In 2018, *Roskomnadzor* [The Russian Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media] tried to block Telegram in Russia. At least twelve thousand people rallied against that decision on 30 April 2018. The decision was later reversed.

8 We have never observed singing from cars about which Noriko Manabe [2013] writes. We did observe singing from cars in Warsaw on 11 November 2021 at the March of Antifascists [Field Report from the approved action “To your freedom and ours!” 11 November 2021, Warsaw]. It was impossible to sing from cars in Russia after 2015.

9 Single pickets were not banned until 2020. Picket lines became popular in 2018–2019. Usually from ten to 100 people came to a certain place with posters and stood each with a poster in turn for about five to ten minutes. The rest of the participants, while waiting, lined up one by one in a real queue, like a queue in a store, until all participants stood with their posters.

10 These songs were written in 2019 in connection with an environmental protest at the Shies railway station in the Arkhangelsk region. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_WEKlIKM5o&t=10s and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QU5_snCJm9s. For more information about the protests on Shies, see [Zhuravlev, Alexandrova, and Lupenko 2020] and [Kozlova 2020].

11 Alexey Navalny is a well-known Russian politician. In 2013, he ran second in the Moscow mayoral elections. In 2018, he was nominated for President of the Russian Federation, but was not approved as a candidate. In January 2021, he was arrested and on 2 February was sentenced to prison for two years and eight months. Rallies against corruption were a significant phenomenon in 2017 in response to the investigative film “He is Not Dimon to You” produced by Alexei Navalny and his Anti-Corruption Foundation and dedicated to investigating the wealth of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

12 *Стены* (*L’Estaca*) [Walls] is a song composed by the Catalan singer-songwriter Lluís Llach in 1968. For the history of the song, see [Ionikova 2020]. For the lyrics of this song in Russian and English, see the Appendix.

13 *Перемен* [Changes] is a song of the group *Kino*. For the lyrics of this song in Russian and English, see the Appendix.

14 *Всё идет по плану* [All Is Going According to Plan] is one of the most famous songs of the Russian punk musician Yegor Letov and his group *Grazhdanskaia Oborona*.

15 *Смерти больше нет* [Death No More] is a song of the group *IC3PEAK*. For the lyrics of this song in Russian and English, see the Appendix.

16 *Kino* [Movies] (1981-1991) was one of the most popular Soviet rock bands of the 1980s.

17 For more on *Arkady Kots*, see <https://www.fhu.art/arkadiy-kots-band?fbclid=IwAR0DDoDGenDDDTMPB9BTQHa67dKAn794ugk5Tz3yYlGRmLxyaLgO8iWs-zY> and the group's website, https://arkadiykots-ru.translate.google.com/translate/arkadiykots-ru.translate.google.com/gruppe.html?_x_tr_sch=http&_x_tr_sl=ru&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=ru&_x_tr_pto=sc

18 The *Internationale* in the version of Arkady Yakovlevich Kots in Russia became the generally recognized party anthem of revolutionary social democracy from the beginning of 1918. It was the anthem of the Soviet state and then the USSR until 1944.

19 These are the Russian Federation Communist Party (RFCP) and some others, including but not limited to the United Communist Party (UCP), RotFront, etc.

20 The term “New Left” denotes left-wing movements focused on global left-wing values, e.g., internationalism, feminism, etc. It is represented by a few small movements that lack cohesion, such as the Russian Socialist Movement (RSM), Socialist Alternative, Left Union, etc.

21 The interview was collected between February and May 2022 by researchers from PS Lab and volunteers.

22 Author's song, bard song, or poetic song is a song genre that arose in the middle of the twentieth century in different countries. Its distinctive features include: the performer as the author of the text and music, guitar accompaniment, and the importance of the text over the music. The genre was very popular in the USSR in the 1960s-1980s.

23 Boris Nemtsov (1959-2015) was a Russian politician and statesman and the first governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region (1991-1997). Since 2008, he had been in opposition to the current government until he was killed in February of 2015.

24 Anna Politkovskaya (1958-2006) was a Russian journalist, press secretary of the *Novaia Gazeta* newspaper, human rights activist, and writer. She was killed on 7 October 2006.

25 *Pornofilmy* [Porn movies] is a Russian punk-rock band from Dubna founded in 2008 by Vadim Kotlyarov (born 1987). Until 2017, the group was known mainly in punk subculture spaces. It gained fame after a series of bans on its performance. Greater popularity, in our opinion, arose in 2019 after the song “It Will Pass” was released. For the lyrics of this song in Russian and English, see the Appendix.

26 Researchers from two teams, Monitoring Contemporary Folklore and the Public Sociology Lab along with volunteers, recorded eighty-nine interviews following questionnaires that included questions about songs. Fifty informants gave positive answers to these questions.

27 “Let It Burn” is a line from the chorus of “Death No More” by IC3PEAK.

28 *Ded Arkhimed* [Grandpa Archimedes] (whose real name is Dmitry, surname unknown) is a video blogger known for performing satirical rap songs with a social focus. He appears in makeup as an old man, affecting an elderly voice and behavior.

29 For more information on the songs people sang during protests at Shies, see [Kozlova 2020]. For a video, see: https://vk.com/im?sel=70745244&z=video70745244_456239308%2F5c8e8aceb27557c3be%2Fpl_post_70745244_3250m.

30 The most famous of these videos is the performance of “*Steny*” by detained musicians from the band Arkady Kots; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFzkifjC2bs>.

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INTERVIEWS

1. Vyacheslav, male, born 1992, Moscow, interview recorded 29 May 2020
2. Male, born 1996, St. Petersburg, interview recorded 16 April 2022
3. Male, born 1991, St. Petersburg, interview recorded 8 April 2022
4. Male, born 1998, Yerevan, online interview recorded 31 March 2022
5. Female, born 1999, Moscow, interview recorded 21 April 2021
6. Female, born 1978, Moscow, interview recorded 21 April 2021
7. Female, born 1993, Moscow, interview recorded 21 April 2021
8. Female, born 2001, Moscow, interview recorded 21 April 2021
9. Male, born 2002, St. Petersburg, interview recorded 23 January 2021
10. Artyom, male, born 1991, Syktyvkar, online interview recorded 27 May 2020
11. Female, born 1996, St. Petersburg, interview recorded 18 January 2021
12. Kirill, male, born 1974, Moscow, interview recorded 25 June 2021
13. Alisa, female, born 2000, Moscow, interview recorded 13 April 2021

FIELD DIARIES

1. Field report from the approved action “All-Russian Environmental Protest Day,” 22 September 2019, Udelny Part, St. Petersburg
2. Field report from the approved march dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Red Army, 23 February 2018, Moscow
3. Field report from the unapproved action “Walking and Protesting for Women’s Rights,” 8 March 2021, St. Petersburg
4. Field report from the unapproved action “We Demand Answers,” 12 June 2017, Moscow
5. Field report from the unapproved action “We Demand Answers,” 12 June 2017, St. Petersburg

6. Field report from unapproved march against Navalny’s arrest, 23 January 2021, St. Petersburg
7. Field report from unapproved march against Navalny’s arrest, 23 January 2021, Moscow
8. Field report from an unapproved protest against Navalny’s arrest, 31 January 2021, St. Petersburg
9. Field report from the unapproved march “Medical Assistance for Navalny,” 21 April 2021, St. Petersburg
10. Field report from the approved action “To your freedom and ours!” 11 November 2021, Warsaw

APPENDIX

1. Viktor Tsoy (*Kino*). Peremen [Changes]

<p>Виктор Цой. Перемен</p>	<p>Viktor Tsoy. Changes. (https://www.language-translation-help.com/support-files/russian_lyrics-victor_tsoi.pdf)</p>
<p>Вместо тепла — зелень стекла, Вместо огня — дым, Из сетки календаря выхвачен день. Красное солнце сгорает до тла, День догорает с ним, На пылающий город падает тень.</p>	<p>Instead of warmth there’s the green of glass, Instead of fire — smoke. A day is plucked from the calendar’s grid. The red sun burns to the ground, the day burns with it.</p>
<p>Перемен — требуют наши сердца. Перемен — требуют наши глаза. В нашем смехе и в наших слезах, И в пульсации вен: “Перемен Мы ждем Перемен”</p>	<p>A shadow falls on a city in flames.</p>
<p>Перемен — требуют наши сердца. Перемен — требуют наши глаза. В нашем смехе и в наших слезах, И в пульсации вен: “Перемен Мы ждем Перемен”</p>	<p>Our hearts demand changes! Our eyes demand changes! In our laughter, in our tears, And in the pulsing of our veins — We are waiting for change.</p>
<p>Электрический свет продолжает наш день, И коробка от спичек пуста, Но на кухне синим цветком горит газ. Сигареты в руках, чай на столе — эта схема проста, И больше нет ничего, всё находится в нас.</p>	<p>Electric lights extend our day, and the box of matches is empty. But in the kitchen gas burns like a blue flower Cigarettes in our hands, tea on the table. This is a simple plan. And after that there’s nothing else, everything can be found in us.</p>

<p>Перемен — требуют наши сердца. Перемен — требуют наши глаза. В нашем смехе и в наших слезах, И в пульсации вен: “Перемен Мы ждем Перемен” Мы не можем похвастаться мудростью глаз И умелыми жестами рук, Нам не нужно все это, чтобы друг друга понять. Сигареты в руках, чай на столе — так замыкается круг, И вдруг нам становится страшно что-то менять.</p>	<p>Our hearts demand changes! Our eyes demand changes! In our laughter, in our tears, And in the pulsing of our veins — We are waiting for change.</p> <p>We can't boast of the wisdom in our eyes Make clever gestures with our hands We don't need all that to understand each other. Cigarettes in our hands, tea on the table, That's how a circle draws close. And suddenly we're afraid to change something.</p>
<p>Перемен — требуют наши сердца. Перемен — требуют наши глаза. В нашем смехе и в наших слезах, И в пульсации вен: “Перемен Мы ждем Перемен”</p>	<p>Our hearts demand changes! Our eyes demand changes! In our laughter, in our tears, And in the pulsing of our veins — We are waiting for change.</p>

2. *Arkady Kots. Steny* [Walls]

<p>Аркадий Коц. Стены (translation from Catalan by Kirill Medvedev).</p>	<p>Walls (English translation from Russian)</p>
<p>Однажды дед говорил мне Когда светало вдали Мы с ним у дверей стояли И телеги мимо ползли Видишь ли эти стены? За ними мы все живём И если мы их не разрушим То заживо здесь сгниём</p> <p>Давай разрушим эту тюрьму Здесь этих стен стоять не должно Так пусть они рухнут, рухнут,</p>	<p>One day grandfather told me, When it was getting light far away We were standing at the door with him And the carts crawled past Do you see these walls? We all live behind them. And if we don't destroy them, Then we'll rot here alive.</p> <p>Let's destroy this prison These walls shouldn't stand here So let them collapse, collapse,</p>

рухнут

Обветшавшие давно

И если ты надавишь плечом
И если мы надавим вдвоём
То стены рухнут, рухнут, рухнут
И свободно мы вздохнём

Руки мои в морщинах
С тех пор прошло много лет
И сил всё меньше и меньше
А стенам износу нет

Я знаю, они гнилые
Но сложно их одолеть
Когда не хватает силы
И я прошу тебя тебя спеть:

Давай разрушим эту тюрьму
Здесь этих стен стоять не должно
Так пусть они рухнут, рухнут,
рухнут
Обветшавшие давно

И если ты надавишь плечом
И если мы надавим вдвоём
То стены рухнут, рухнут, рухнут
И свободно мы вздохнём

Деда давно не слышно
Злой ветер его унёс
Но мы с ним стоим всё там же
Под тот же грохот колёс

И когда кто-то проходит мимо
Я стараюсь погромче петь
Ту песню, которую спел он
Прежде, чем умереть

collapse

Run-down for a long time

And if you push with your shoulder
And if we push together
Then the walls will collapse,
collapse, collapse
And we will breathe freely

My hands are wrinkled
Many years have passed since then
And the forces are less and less
And there is no wear on the walls

I know they're rotten,
But it's difficult to overcome them
When there's not enough power
And I ask you to sing:

Let's destroy this prison
These walls shouldn't stand here
So let them collapse, collapse,
collapse
Run-down for a long time

And if you push with your shoulder
And if we push together
Then the walls will collapse,
collapse, collapse
And we will breathe freely

Grandfather has not been heard for a
long time,
The evil wind took him away,
But he and I are still standing there,
Under the same rumble of wheels,

And when someone passes by,
I try to sing louder,
The song that he sang,
Before he died:

<p>Давай разрушим эту тюрьму Здесь этих стен стоять не должно Так пусть они рухнут, рухнут, рухнут Обветшавшие давно</p> <p>И если ты надавишь плечом И если мы надавим вдвоём То стены рухнут, рухнут, рухнут И свободно мы вздохнём</p>	<p>Let's destroy this prison These walls shouldn't stand here So let them collapse, collapse, collapse Run-down for a long time</p> <p>And if you push with your shoulder And if we push together Then the walls will collapse, collapse, collapse And we will breathe freely</p>
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3. Vladimir Kotlyarov (*Pornofilm*). Eto proidet [This Will Pass]

Порнофильмы. Это пройдёт	Pornofilm: This Will Pass
<p>Все пройдет, точно майские грозы, Чьи-то слезы, 2 пальца у рта, Как мандат ах.евшего единорога, Как допрос, как усмешка мента, Как Лефортовские коридоры, Как Беслан, как Норд-Остовский газ Федеральная свора бездушных майоров Севастополь, Донецк и Луганск. Это точно пройдет.</p> <p>Это точно пройдет! С пакетом мокрым на голове, С электрометками на руке Моя Россия сидит в тюрьме, Но верь же мне: Это пройдет!</p> <p>Какой же черный нам выпал век, А мне мерещится вдалеке Живой надежды забытый свет.. Так верь же мне: Это пройдет...</p>	<p>Someone's tears, a V sign on the mouth, Like a United Russia MP's mandate Like an interrogation, like a cop's sneer Like the corridors at Lefortovo Prison Like Beslan, like the poison gas at Nord-Ost Like the federal pack of soulless majors Sevastopol, Donetsk and Luhansk This will definitely pass.</p> <p>This will definitely pass! A wet plastic bag on its head Electric shock marks on its hands My Russia is behind bars, But trust me: It will pass!</p> <p>What black times we live in But in the distance I seem to see The forgotten light of living hope, so trust me This will definitely pass</p>

Словно свастика русского мира,
 Как пожары в сибирских лесах,
 Срок для честных ребят из Пензы
 и Питера,
 Как набитый детьми автозак,
 И из "ящика" вращую нечисть,
 228 и шмон в 5 утра,
 Как омоновец храбро калечащий
 женщин,
 Как декабрь, январь и февраль
 Это точно пройдет.

Это точно пройдёт!
 С пакетом мокрым на голове,
 С электрометками на руке
 Моя Россия сидит в тюрьме,
 Но верь же мне:
 Это пройдет!

Какой же черный нам выпал век,
 А мне мерещится вдалеке
 Былой надежды забытый свет..
 Источник teksty-pesenok.ru
 Так верь же мне: Это точно
 пройдет...

Все пройдет, все проходит когда-
 то,
 Через год, через день, через миг,
 В одиночестве в морге вчерашний
 диктатор,
 А теперь просто мертвый старик.
 И с петель срежут двери в
 Лефортово,
 И Россия воспрянет от сна,
 Малазийским истерзанным
 взорванным бортом
 К нам с тобой в ледяную избушку
 ворвется весна.

Это точно пройдёт!
 С пакетом мокрым на голове,

Like the swastika of the Russian
 world
 Like the fires in Siberia's forests
 Prison sentences for honest guys
 from Penza and Petersburg
 Paddy wagons packed with children
 Or the lying scum on the telly
 Article 228 and shakedowns at five
 in the morning
 Like riot crops bravely maiming
 women
 Like December, January and
 February
 This will definitely pass.

This will definitely pass!
 A wet plastic bag on its head
 Electric shock marks on its hands
 My Russia is behind bars
 But trust me:
 It will pass!

What black times we live in
 But in the distance I seem to see
 The forgotten light of living hope, so
 trust me
 This will definitely pass

All of it will pass, everything passes
 sometime
 In a year, in a day, in an instant
 Yesterday's dictator will lie alone in
 the morgue
 Now just a dead old man
 And the doors at Lefortovo will be
 cut from their hinges
 And Russia will rise from its slumber
 Like the battered and blown-up
 Malaysian airplane
 Spring will burst into your icy hut

This will definitely pass!
 A wet plastic bag on its head

<p>С электрометками на руке Моя Россия сидит в тюрьме, Но верь же мне: Это пройдёт!</p> <p>Какой же чёрный нам выпал век, А мне мерещится вдалеке Живой надежды забытый свет.. Так верь же мне: Это точно пройдет...</p>	<p>Electric shock marks on its hands My Russia is behind bars, But trust me: It will pass!</p> <p>What black times we live in But in the distance I seem to see The forgotten light of living hope, so trust me: This will definitely pass</p>
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4. IC3PEAK band. Smerti bol'she net [Death No More]

<p>IC3PEAK. Смерти больше нет The performance of the song by the group at the rally on 10 August 2019 can be watched and listened to here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8MSUhNmS3k</p>	<p>IC3PEAK. Death No More You can listen to the song: https://lyricsfa.com/2020/11/23/ic3peak-смерти-больше-нет-death-no-more-english-translation-lyrics/</p>
<p>Я заливаю глаза керосином Пусть всё горит, пусть всё горит На меня смотрит вся Россия Пусть всё горит, пусть всё горит (x2) Я теперь готова ко всему на свете Я отсидела свой срок в интернете Выхожу на улицу гладить кота А его переезжает тачка мента Я иду по городу в чёрном худи Тут обычно холодно, злые люди Впереди меня ничего не ждёт Но я жду тебя, ты меня найдёшь</p> <p>В золотых цепях я утопаю в болоте Кровь моя чище чистых наркотиков Вместе с другими тебя скрутят на площади</p>	<p>I fill my eyes with kerosene Let it all burn, let it all burn All of Russia is watching me Let it all burn, let it all burn (x2) Now I'm prepared for anything at all I've already spent my time in the internet jail I'm going out in the street to play with my cat But the cop car runs the cat over I'm going through the city wearing my black hoodie It's cold as usual and people are wicked Nothing awaits me ahead But I'm waiting for you, one day you'll find me Wrapped up in gold chains, I'm sinking in this swamp My blood is purer than the purest narcotic drugs You and the others will get hooked for street protest tomorrow</p>

А я скручу в своей новой жилплощади (dce x2) Смерти больше нет (x4)	And I'll go off the hooks in my new accommodation unit (all x2) Death no more (x4)
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