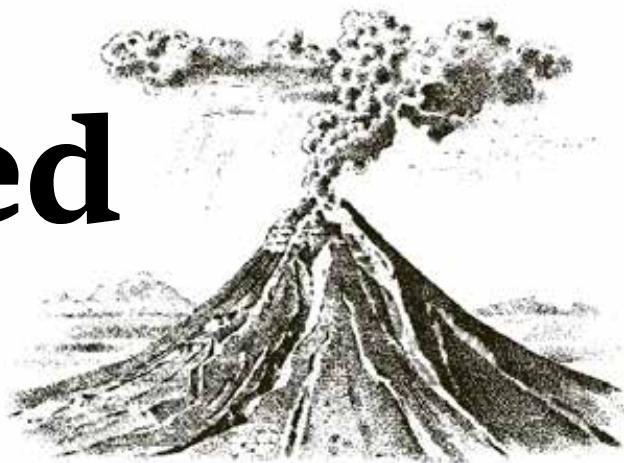


Inhabited Island



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“Constant attention spoils your conscience. It begins to groan at the slightest inconvenience, and your mind respectfully bows before it ...”

Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. "The Inhabited Island"

Editor-in-chief's column



Olga Belokon

We continue to closely monitor developments in Russia and Ukraine, as well as what is happening in New Zealand's Russian community.

Russia

For the first time in the history of Russia, the head of state has been charged with being a war criminal. The International Criminal Court in The Hague, representing

most of the world's countries (152 countries), has issued a warrant for his arrest. You can't say this is something we can be "proud of" – because this is the rarest precedent in international practice. From this moment on, everything has somehow fallen into place. At last, the criminal has been declared a criminal.

A wave of unprecedented repression is unfolding in the country. Alexei Navalny is slowly and demonstratively being killed in prison. Vladimir Kara-Murza received an unthinkable 25-year sentence for openly expressing his civic position. Ilya Yashin's cruel sentence has also been confirmed. This courageous man used his last word as an opportunity to once again clearly and openly express his attitude towards the Putin regime and its crimes, wittily noting that he was ready to give up his place in prison to Putin (<https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-65277997>). Schoolgirl Masha Moskaleva was separated from her father and placed in an orphanage for ... an anti-war drawing! Her father was accused of a crime. They hunted him all the way to Belarus, and now his whereabouts are unknown.



Drawing by Masha Moskaleva

Since the beginning of 2023, at least 20 investigations of high treason have been opened in Russia. This is five times more than in the same period last year. Why did so many traitors to the motherland suddenly appear? Numerous cases of discrediting the Russian army are also being initiated. The country has been swept by a wave of denunciations. Denunciations (statements by "concerned citizens") have become a mass phenomenon <https://lenta.ru/news/2023/04/12/donoss/>. Now a post on the Internet or a careless phrase can be grounds for criminal prosecution. Famous people, including celebrities such as Liya Akhedzhakova and Alla Pugacheva, are being denounced. The recent removal of Kirill Serebrennikov's ballet "Nureyev" from the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre can be considered an extreme example of the absurdity taking place in Russia. The decision was made because of the law on the complete prohibition of LGBT propaganda <https://www.forbes.ru/forbeslife/487981-balet-nureev-serebrennikova-snali-s-repertuara-bol-sogo-teatra-iz-za-zakona-o-lgbt>.¹ Russians, get ready! Tomorrow you will be forbidden to perform and listen to the works of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky!²



A fragment from Tchaikovsky ballet ‘Swan Lake’ with a label “FORBIDDEN”.

We wanted to put this collage suggesting Tchaikovsky’s Dance of the Small Swans has been banned in our humour section, but then realised it was not funny.

It looks like a bad dream. It's hard to imagine that all this is really happening. For our generation, who grew up in the Soviet Union of the post-Stalin era, denunciations were considered something shameful, deserving of contempt. Alas, now Russia is not the country we left 30, 20, or 10 years ago, and not even the country that was shocked on February 24, 2022. I believe that Russia at the beginning of 2023 will attract the attention of future historians studying totalitarian regimes. In the meantime, analysts and commentators compare the current situation in the country with what happened in Nazi Germany and with what happened under Stalinism. Yes, these comparisons suggest themselves ... And the newly adopted law on electronic prescription notices is seen by some as a modern version of serfdom. Young men who refuse to report for duty will lose their driver's licenses. Bans on driving a car was previously introduced only in Nazi Germany – for Jews, and in Saudi Arabia – for women

The War in Ukraine

The offensive announced by Russia last year passed somehow unnoticed and was realised in many months of marking time, stubborn and stupid, bloody and senseless. Bakhmut... How many lives the insane adventure of the main Kremlin criminal has cost, is worth and will cost

Now the whole world is anxiously awaiting the start of the Ukrainian army's planned offensive and what will follow. Hundreds of commentators are making predictions, and the military leadership of Ukraine is pleading not to be put under psychological pressure by endless questions about the timing of the start of this offensive. Everyone's nerves are stretched to the limit. After all, the future of both Ukraine and Russia, and not only them, depends on the results of this offensive ...

The Russian Community in New Zealand

As in previous months, the cultural life of the Russian community in New Zealand basically flows in some parallel world, where there is neither a war in Ukraine, nor an ominous theatre of the absurd played by the Kremlin authorities in front of its people, partly frozen with fear and horror, partly duped and corrupted by it.

However, this is not entirely true. Some do stand up and look beyond the parallel world into the real world, inviting their viewers and listeners there. So, according to eyewitnesses, at a recent concert for the Russian-speaking public, the popular singer Marina Bloom performed a Ukrainian song in Ukrainian, causing "stony faces" in a good half of the hall. Bravo, Marina!

To the credit of our few anti-war activists – first, the Russian-speaking Integrity Alliance NZ (RSANZ) group – the guys do not succumb to the psychological fatigue natural in the current situation and actively continue their noble activities, organising protests and collecting humanitarian aid for victims of the war in Ukraine. Their activities and its results are devoted to the note of Lena Nikiforova "Russians of New Zealand, help Ukraine!" (page 18 of this issue).

Among the most significant events, of course, we should mention the protest action that the RSIA NZ group organised in Auckland on February 24, on the anniversary of the start of the Ukrainian war. The same actions were held on this day in other cities of New Zealand.

On April 29, "Inhabited Island" together with the poetry club "Stikhya" has organised a musical and poetic evening "You can't choose the time you live in". The title of the evening is a quote from a famous song by Sergei Nikitin to poems by Alexander Kushner. This song fits so closely into the context of the current historical moment that we did not look for another name for the evening, although this song had already been played at our previous musical and poetic evening in

July last year, and the wonderful duo of Mikhail Frolov and Lana Dzhandzhgava gave their recent concert in Auckland the same name. We invite all who share our attitude to what is happening to this evening.



Those who have not yet figured out and understood what is happening, but want to understand, are also invited. There will be no flags or political speeches at the evening. We will sing songs and read poems, new and old (after all, what is happening now has already happened in the history of mankind before). You will also have the opportunity to chat in an informal setting over a glass of wine, meet new people and, if desired, perform, sharing their thoughts, poems and songs. In this issue, you can also read the most interesting, programmatic article by Alla Shymanski "For young people contemplating life ...", which, we hope, will help many to understand the meaning of what is happening now in Ukraine and Russia, an interview with a resident of the Dnipropetrovsk region, Natasha Kissenko, as a continuation of the theme of "eyewitness accounts", an interview with Konstantin Sigachev, the leader of the Auckland rock band "Hit Pump", and a note by Natalia Belyaeva about a Slavic festival held in February.

¹ Rudolf Nureyev (1938 -1993), one of the greatest male ballet dancers of his generation, was a gay.

² Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), one of the greatest Russian composers, was a gay.

For young people contemplating life

*Somewhere at the last stop of the train line
Let's say thank you to this fate,
But from the sins of our eternal Motherland
I wouldn't create an idol for myself*

Bulat Okudzhava



Alla Shymanski

Once in a park, I got into a conversation with a young woman called Polina. In the conversation, as is often the case now, the topic of the war arose, and she asked me: "Tell me, who is to blame for Russia's war with Ukraine?" A whole gamut of emotions and feelings flashed through my head in a second. From indignation "How, is it still not clear?" to gratitude that the

young woman wanted to figure it out. I remembered several cases in which mature adults, confident that they were right, openly supported Russian aggression, calling Ukrainians Nazis and raising money in support of the Russian army. Others are either silent or mumble that not everything is so simple and opinions may be different. There can be no halftones here: either you are for fascism or against. But the most important thing is with what conscience, thoughts and actions young people will proceed with their lives. Do they understand why their peers bring death and destruction to Ukraine and why they themselves are dying? It is the young who bear the burden of responsibility and repentance for the future for the crimes of the Russian state. They will have to wash away the shame of Russia.

1. Independence and territorial integrity

"To understand who is to blame; who is the aggressor and who is the victim," I began my conversation with Polina, "first ask yourself simple questions: who attacked whom? On whose territory is the war being waged? Who destroys cities and kills civilians? Despite Putin's false propaganda, the answers are evident thanks to modern satellite surveillance systems, witness testimony, and a host of international documents. Let's focus on some of them.

8.12.1991 in Belarus, the heads of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and later other former Soviet republics, signed the Belovezha Accords on the termination of the existence of the USSR and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Article 5 of the treaty states that "the *High Contracting Parties recognise and respect each other's territorial integrity and the inviolability of existing frontiers.*"

5.12.1994 Russia, together with the United States and Britain, signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Guarantees, where it acted as a guarantor of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders in exchange for Ukraine's

nuclear-free status. In particular, it states that "the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America reaffirm to Ukraine their commitment in accordance with the principles of the CSCE Final Act to respect the independence, sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine", as well as "reaffirm the commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine and that *none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine*".

In addition to these agreements, Russia signed several other documents, such as the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine, signed in 1997, and extended by Putin-Medvedev in 2010, which emphasised the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Russia's seizure of Ukrainian territories is a gross violation of international law and a political crime. Václav Havel described Putin's era of rule as follows: "*The era of President Putin brought a new type of dictatorship ... It combines the worst features of communism and capitalism. Simply put, a gang of KGB officers and mafiosi came to power.*"

2. Seizure of Crimea

"But after all, many residents of Crimea voted for the annexation of Crimea to Russia. This is Russian territory legally," my interlocutor said, half-affirming and half-asking.

"Ukraine, having become an independent state, gradually overcame the Soviet legacy and was already turning towards integration with European countries. For Putin, who has built a dictatorial state, the goal is to turn Ukraine into his vassal and recreate something like the Soviet Union. The then pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, under the influence of the Kremlin, changed his foreign policy towards Moscow and refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union, which was contrary to Putin's goals.

The change of course of the country in February-March 2014 led to anti-presidential and anti-government protests (Euro-maidan), as a result of which Yanukovich fled the country, thereby removing himself from presidential powers, and there was a change of president and government in the country. Russian propaganda spread claims of an anti-constitutional and anti-state coup in Ukraine. Russia used these statements to justify its subsequent aggressive actions against Ukraine. The truth is that the change of power in Ukraine was legal and took place in strict accordance with the constitution, which was approved by the Venice Commission on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the cities of Crimea, as well as throughout Ukraine, rallies were held in support of the new Ukrainian government. The Russian leadership perceived the development of events in Ukraine as a threat to its fundamental interests, and already in February, for several days, the initial covert transfer of Russian troops to the peninsula took place, where, in the meantime, civil confrontation between Euromaidan supporters and pro-Russian separatists continued.

On February 27, Russia's active actions to seize Crimea began – Russian special forces seized the government buildings of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, after which a session of the Supreme Council was held in the seized parliament building. A new government of Crimea, headed by the leader of the Russian Unity party, Sergei Aksyonov, was formed. The central authorities of Ukraine did not recognise this “government.”

On March 1, the Federation Council of the Russian Federation granted President Putin's official request for permission to use Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine, even though they were already there. Russian servicemen without insignia, together with volunteer detachments, blocked all facilities and military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the territory of the peninsula. The Ukrainian commanders refused to obey the new government of Crimea.

The political instrument of the annexation of Crimea by Russia was a referendum held on March 16. Its conduct contradicted the Ukrainian Constitution and was held with many legal violations. In addition, the violation of international law prohibiting the use of force and the invasion of Crimea by Russian troops make the result of the referendum – the secession of Crimea and its subsequent incorporation into the Russian Federation – illegal. Since the prohibition on the use of force is a norm of international law, no other state can recognise this result.

On March 18, Russia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Crimea signed an agreement on the annexation of Crimea to Russia. From March 19 to March 25, Russia completed the seizure of the remaining Ukrainian military bases in Crimea, and by March 26 gained full military control over this territory.

The UN General Assembly Resolution on the Territorial Integrity of Ukraine of 27.03.2014 states that “the *UN General Assembly reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, declares the **illegality** of the **Crimean referendum** and does not recognise any change in the status of the *Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol*. Of the 193 countries in the UN, 100 were in favour, 11 were against, 58 abstained and 24 did not vote.*

In particular, the resolution states that “the referendum was not sanctioned by Ukraine” and “without legal force, cannot be the basis for any change in the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol.” The resolution also “calls on all states, international organisations and specialised agencies not to recognise the change in the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on the basis of the referendum held on March 16 and to refrain from any actions or dealing that might be interpreted as recognising any such altered status.”

3. Occupation of Donbas

“Well, what about the Donbas? This was where Ukraine conducted a genocide and blockaded the inhabitants of Donbas, waging war on the civilian population for eight years,” Polina repeated the widely disseminated lies of Russian propaganda.

“Think about whether it seems strange to you that the question of the so-called genocide of the Russian-speaking population of Donbas arose after the annexation of Crimea and the introduction of Russian troops into the Donbas. During the 25 years of Ukraine's independence, the inhabitants of Donbas, together with the whole of Ukraine, were overcoming the

Soviet legacy, economic and political difficulties, sought to embark on the path of development of society predetermined by modern civilisation, and did not declare their desire to secede from Ukraine. In addition, if Russian-speaking Ukrainians really needed protection, Russia could grant them asylum, and instead of spending money on war, provide refugees with a decent life in Russia. But that was not what Putin wanted to do. He doesn't care about people, even in his own country. In pursuit of his goals, he chose to “rescue” the inhabitants of Donbas by killing them, first covertly, in a gangster way, denying the presence and incitement of Russia in the Donbas (“we don't have any troops there”), and then unleashing a monstrous war.

Inspired by the seizure of Crimea, the Russian authorities initiated an anti-government movement in the eastern districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

As the former “people's mayor” of the city of Sloviansk of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), Vyacheslav Ponomaryov, said to the Regnum news agency ([ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fighting_for_Slavyansk_\(2014\)](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fighting_for_Slavyansk_(2014))), at the end of February 2014, after the removal of President Yanukovich from power, a “people's squad” was formed in Sloviansk “to counter the internal and external representatives of the fascist junta”. Ponomaryov was chosen commander of the “squad”.

On the night of April 11-12, a group of armed men led by a Russian citizen, FSB colonel, Igor Strelkov (Girkin), crossed the state border of Ukraine in the Donetsk region, where they were met by Ponomaryov.

Uniting with Ponomaryov's “people's squad”, Strelkov's detachment seized administrative buildings in the city of Sloviansk, over which Russian flags were raised. According to Ponomaryov, on the very first day, the construction of fortifications and checkpoints around the city began. The main roads were blocked. On the 15th of May, the Supreme Council of the DPR appointed Strelkov head of the Security Council and Minister of Defence of the DPR. Sloviansk became a strategically important point, the centre of confrontation between separatists and government troops in the Donetsk region.

On May 11, referendums on self-determination were held in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as a result of which the “state independence” of the DPR and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) was announced. The international community recognised neither the referendums nor the newly proclaimed LPR and DPR as legitimate.

In June 2014, Russia began supplying separatist forces with military equipment, as well as air defence systems. At the end of August 2014, the invasion of regular units of the Russian Federation into Ukraine began, which Moscow denied. It said only Russian volunteers were participating in the conflict in the Donbas.

According to a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights dated December 15, 2014, the situation in the conflict zone was characterised by a complete lack of law and order. Persecution and intimidation of people with pro-Ukrainian sympathies, public humiliation and fictitious executions had become widespread. On July 11, 2014, Amnesty International Ukraine published a report on abductions, beatings and torture of protesters and journalists in eastern Ukraine. The report, entitled “Abductions and

Torture in Eastern Ukraine," compiles evidence of hundreds of cases of armed kidnappings by separatists.

In his interview with Ukrainian journalist Dmitry Gordon, recorded on May 19, 2020, in the Gordon programme, Strelkov spoke about his participation in the seizure of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas, as well as about crimes he had committed. In particular, Strelkov stated that he personally gave the order to assassinate two students suspected of being spies, Yuri Popravka and Yuri Dyakovsky, whose bodies with traces of torture were found in April 2014 in the Kazenny Torets River near Sloviansk ([ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strelkov, Igor Ivanovich](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strelkov,_Igor_Ivanovich)). Strelkov also admitted that he was responsible for the murder of Gorlovka City Council deputy Vladimir Rybak, who tried to return the flag of Ukraine to the building of the Gorlovka Town Hall. Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office officially charged Strelkov with these war crimes, as well as the creation of "military tribunals" and executions in Sloviansk with the participation of at least nine assistants. An investigation by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) has established the identities of the participants in the "military tribunals" in Sloviansk ([ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strelkov, Igor Ivanovich](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strelkov,_Igor_Ivanovich)).

On the same day, after the interview aired, Gordon made an emergency official statement that the recording of this interview, made in collaboration with the special services of Ukraine, was transferred to the international court in The Hague and would become a witness at the trial of the annexation of Crimea and the occupation of Donbas.

Strelkov is also one of four accused of shooting down a Malaysian Boeing flight MH17 on 17.07.2014, killing all 298 people on board. After a thorough investigation of this tragedy, the International Court of Justice in The Hague concluded that MH17 was shot down by a Buk anti-aircraft missile launcher brought from Russian territory. The International Court of Justice in The Hague found Strelkov, along with two other accomplices, guilty and sentenced them to life imprisonment (in absentia), as well as to pay 16 million euros in compensation to the relatives of the victims.

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and a humanitarian catastrophe. Back in March 2015, Kyiv appealed to the UN and the EU with a request to consider the possibility of introducing a peacekeeping contingent into the Donbas. For eight years, the issue of introducing a peacekeeping mission was repeatedly discussed in the UN Security Council, but was blocked by the Russian Federation, which holds a veto.

Two days before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Putin signed a decree recognising the DPR and LPR as independent states, as well as an agreement on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. These decrees, in particular, stipulate that Russian armed forces must "ensure the maintenance of peace" on the territory of the DPR and LPR.

The resolution of the eleventh emergency special session of the UN General Assembly "Aggression against Ukraine", adopted on 2.03.2022, condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine, requires the **complete withdrawal of Russian troops** and the **cancellation of the decision to recognise the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics** (141 in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions).

During the war, sham referendums were held in four regions of Ukraine occupied by Russia: Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. On September 30, after holding referendums, Russia announced the annexation of these regions, which led to a further escalation of the war.

Shortly thereafter, on 12.11.2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: respect for the principles of the UN Charter" with 143 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions. In it, the UN member states "**condemned the organisation by the Russian Federation of illegal so-called referendums.**" The resolution demanded that Russia cancel its decisions on the annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporozhzhia regions, "since they are a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and run counter to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter," as well as "the withdrawal of all its armed forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders." The document states that the actions of the Russian Federation are illegal and have no legal effect under international law. The resolution called on all countries of the world not to recognise these territories as part of Russia."

4. What Russia has achieved

"So, why, for what purposes did Russia invade Ukrainian territory and unleash a war? Maybe it brought some benefit, benefit for Russia itself and the Russian people? I heard that one of the goals of the annexation of Crimea and other territories was to prevent NATO from advancing eastward to Russia's borders, not to allow the deployment of NATO military bases in Crimea," my interlocutor said, asking rather than affirming.

"Firstly, NATO member countries already existed near the borders of Russia (the Baltic countries, Poland, Turkey and others) and Ukraine's membership, which could not take place soon for several reasons, would not have greatly changed the situation for Russia. Secondly, Russia has achieved just the opposite result. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has accelerated the process of NATO membership, even for countries that had no intention of joining, such as Sweden and Finland. In other words, the war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine has not alienated but brought NATO very close to Russia's borders.

"Russian statements say that Ukraine was preparing to attack Russia first. Russia only got ahead of it to protect itself," Polina objected.

And do you really think that a small, unarmed and nuclear-free Ukraine with a weak economy was going to attack and fight with a huge nuclear Russia and the second army in the world, as it was believed at the time of the start of the war? That is, Ukraine first gave Russia nuclear weapons by signing the Budapest Memorandum, and then was going to attack it? What for? Ukraine has never made any territorial claims against Russia. It's not even serious to discuss it.

"But the main goal of Russia's Special Military Operation was to rescue Ukrainians from fascism and the Nazi junta entrenched in Kyiv," Polina said thoughtfully.

And in what way does Russia rescue the people of Ukraine from fascism? By destroying this nation as a result of bombing, violence and atrocities committed by the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine? Destroying cities and towns,

targeting attacks on the infrastructure of the entire country to doom civilians to suffering. If there were a fascist regime in Ukraine, then the entire civilised world would not stand up for it but would support Putin in his "noble" struggle against fascism. On the contrary, Russia is recognised as a terrorist state. And who asked Russia to rescue Ukrainians? Why don't the people of Ukraine welcome the "liberators" and greet them with flowers? From the very first days of the war, the people of Ukraine have rallied as never before and are courageously fighting for their freedom. Putin, trying to break Ukraine and the pro-Western democratic choice of Ukrainian society, by his actions ultimately contributed to the unity of the nation that no nationalists could achieve.

For Putin, who has established a dictatorship in Russia, a reasonable path for the development of Ukrainian society is unacceptable. This is, first of all, a threat to his personal power. For the sake of satisfying his ambitions, he is ready to strew his path to glory with corpses. In addition to the lives of Ukrainians, this war has already claimed tens of thousands of lives of Russian soldiers, young people sent to kill and be killed. Why?

- Think about it, Polina:

16.03.2022. The US Senate **unanimously recognised Putin as a war criminal**. The resolution calls on the International Criminal Court in The Hague and other countries to pay attention to the investigation of the crimes of the Russian military committed during the invasion of Russian troops into the territory of Ukraine.

13.10.2022. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) unanimously approved a resolution **recognising the Russian regime as "terrorist"**. Ninety-nine PACE deputies voted in support of the resolution, one abstained.

23.11.2022. The European Parliament adopted a resolution **recognising Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism**. "*The deliberate attacks and atrocities committed by the Russian Federation against the civilian population of Ukraine, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and other serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law amount to acts of terror,*" "*Putin and his government must be held accountable for these crimes before an international tribunal,*" the resolution says. (494 MEPs in favour, 58 against.) Putin's imperial plans, covered by lies about the salvation of the Ukrainian people, politically turned into a complete collapse for Russia: The Russian government established itself before the whole world as a criminal regime, and Russia began to be considered a terrorist country. This is another "achievement" of Russia in the war with Ukraine.

"But, perhaps, the war led to the growth of the Russian economy and the wellbeing of the people?" – Polina did not calm down.

And here Russia has achieved the exact opposite result. The seizure of Crimea and the war in Ukraine hit the Russian economy very hard. In the media, you can find numerous examples of professional analysis of the impending economic catastrophe of Russia. For example, after the annexation of Crimea, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague has made several decisions to recover multibillion-dollar fines from Russia to compensate for damage caused by the expropriation of the property of Ukrainian companies.

Since 2014, Moscow has invested huge sums of money in the economy of Crimea, financing several large infrastructure projects (for example, the Crimean Bridge), as well as in the

form of subsidies from the budget, multibillion-dollar investments, social spending, etc. According to Bloomberg, Russia spent 1.5 trillion rubles on Crimea in the first five years of the occupation. Many Russian enterprises and the country's economy as a whole suffered from Western sanctions imposed due to the annexation of Crimea and military intervention.

According to the Forbes news agency, Russia spent more than \$82 billion in the first nine months of the war. All these costs could have been spent on improving the welfare of the Russian people, but instead billions are thrown into war, not to create, but to destroy.

14.11.2022. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution providing for **compensation to Ukraine for the damage caused by the Russian invasion**. The resolution provides for the creation of a register of damage caused by Russia to Ukraine and a mechanism for paying reparations. (94 countries in favour, 14 against, 73 abstentions.)

The economic downturn, rising prices, sanctions, and the loss of oil and gas markets are also the result of Putin's adventure. Putin's regime has condemned many future generations of Russians to a miserable existence, led to a complete rupture of relations with Ukraine and many countries, and made Russia a rogue state and a criminal.

This is not a complete list of Russia's "achievements" since the beginning of Russian intervention in Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea.

5. False patriotism.

"However," I continued, "despite the catastrophe for Ukraine and the negative consequences for Russia itself, the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the Special Military Operation brought significant dividends to Putin and the Russian authorities in the domestic political arena and were supported, according to polls, by a large majority of Russians. This contributed to the growth of the rating of President Putin and the federal government, which had been falling for several years. Moreover, according to the pollster Levada Centre, published on 3.12.2022, cited by the American Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 74% of Russians still supported the war in Ukraine. I also had to deal with many former friends from Russia who support Putin and the invasion of Ukraine. Unfortunately, there are quite a few of them here in New Zealand.

"How can that be?" – Polina was indignant. "I cannot contemplate how the monstrous crimes of Russia against Ukraine, such obvious facts as Russia's violation of international laws, condemnation and non-recognition of what the world community has done are transformed in the minds of Russians and led to approval of Putin's policy."

These people do not need facts and arguments; they blindly repeat the brazen lies of Putin's media. They do not understand, or rather, do not want to understand what is happening, do not see the chain of causes and their consequences. It was they, who approved the seizure of Crimea and Donbas in 2014, who gave Putin the go-ahead for further intervention against Ukraine. It is they, who explicitly or tacitly support the invasion, who bear the guilt and responsibility, together with the Putin regime, for the deaths of thousands of innocent people in Ukraine, for the genocide of the Ukrainian people. They do not want to understand that it was they who led their own country to disaster, to the death of their own children,

sent to another country to kill, and condemned their children and grandchildren to bear the burden of responsibility and retribution for the crimes committed thanks to their support. They accuse the whole world of Russophobia. They say Russia is surrounded by enemies who dream of Russia's collapse. But the biggest Russophobes are Putin, his regime, and anyone who openly or tacitly supports them, even though they call themselves true patriots of Russia. Dictatorial and totalitarian regimes play games with the concepts of "patriotism and homeland", using them as "bonds" of society. Having robbed the people, they have nothing more to offer the people, they have nothing more to keep the people in the country. Any dissent is regarded as a betrayal. The Putin regime brutally cracks down on those who disagree with it, who oppose the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and there are many examples of this. These people, at the cost of their lives, save Russians from shame, being the honour and conscience of the nation.

Any form of protest: active participation in information campaigns, even conversations and the supply of information to relatives and acquaintances, as opposed to active and tacit support for the Putin regime and the invasion, can change a lot.

The brutal destruction of the opposition makes it almost impossible to organise and hold open mass protest rallies in Russia. In this regard, protests against Putin's regime and the Russian invasion by foreign Russian communities play a significant role. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, such actions, although not as numerous as we would like, have been carried out in New Zealand. This allows the world to see that there are thoughtful, conscientious Russians, and there is hope for the revival of a democratic Russia, where people will live well, and not die for far-fetched ideals imposed by the state. "Kill the dragon in yourself, and only then will you defeat the dragon on the throne, who creates iniquity, sends your children to kill and be killed." (Eugene Schwartz, "The Dragon").

I'm like a miner: I get up in the morning, put on a headlamp

Foreword by the Editor-in-Chief. We continue a series of publications in which direct witnesses of the war in Ukraine talk about their experiences. Natasha Kissenko lives in the small town of Novomoskovsk, 30 kilometres from Dnipro. This territory has not been occupied by Russian troops and is relatively far from the front line. On the second of April, we managed to contact Natasha on Zoom. She kindly answered our questions.



Natasha Kissenko

Natasha, please tell us about yourself and your family.

I am 47 years old, I have two adult sons, the eldest is 27 years old, the youngest is 21. My parents are pensioners. They live in the next street. My sister and nephews ended up in the occupied territory in the Kherson region. My youngest son is studying, the eldest is working. We live in a small provincial town,

Novomoskovsk, 30 kilometres from the regional centre, Dnipro. Before the war, the population of Novomoskovsk was 70,000. I cannot say how many inhabitants remain.

Can you tell us about how you learned the war had begun?

I will never be able to forget this day. The day before, February 23rd, was a wonderful day, sunny. People on the streets were smiling, children were playing in parks. On the morning of the 24th, I woke up, as usual, turned on the TV to watch the news, and then they showed Kharkiv – bombed ... The buildings in the main square, where the University is located, were damaged. They broadcast the president's speech, in which he reported that Russia had attacked Ukraine, and that martial law was being introduced in the country. All channels broadcast only news; all other programmes were cancelled. This news is still going on 24 hours a day. On the radio, all

entertainment programmes were also cancelled. I went to the kitchen for breakfast. And then there was an explosion. The doors and windows jerked as if a strong gust of wind had blown past. The front door slammed violently.

Did you have any explosions on February 24th?

Yes. We have two military camps not far away, 10-12 kilometres away. They were struck. My son had to go to the doctor on this day. The college wrote that classes were cancelled. Everyone was switching to online learning. I went to work. When I arrived, they said to me: "Why did you come?" We were all sent home. None of us had ever been in such a situation before, and no-one really knew how to behave, what to do. They began to announce on TV that everyone urgently needed to collect documents, money and the most necessary things in case of bombing and the need to take refuge in a bomb shelter. The panic in the city was crazy. People, of course, as always, began to buy food and medicine. ATMs stopped working, terminals in stores too. Everything was sold only for cash. Military vehicles drove around the city. There were soldiers with machineguns everywhere. You walked through the city and felt as if you were in a horror movie. Your brain didn't want to understand that this was reality. Yesterday everything had been so good. I was going on holiday, my tickets had already been bought ... We had been warned, and we understood that something serious could begin, but no-one wanted to believe it ...

Checkpoints and anti-tank "hedgehogs" were set up in the city. Everyone was urged to stock up on food and dry food. They also announced that a blackout was being introduced. With the onset of darkness, it was possible to turn on the light only after all the windows were tightly curtained. But we simply didn't turn on the lights, we sat in the dark. That was the end of the day ...

Can you describe the most dramatic episode of the war that you witnessed or participated in?

It was March 7. I remember exactly, it was early in the morning. I was asleep. Suddenly, I woke up and heard a sound. It was definitely not a plane. It was a loud sound. It is difficult to describe this sound in words. But I had the feeling that it was flying very close and could hit the roof. Of course, I was scared. Later I learned that four missiles targeting Dnipro flew over the city at that time.

During the war, we became acutely aware of what we heard. Here is the feeling: you immediately react to any sound: the door opens, the spoon in the glass rings, someone has passed somewhere – and you shudder, look around. This has never happened before. Previously, to amuse themselves the boys removed the mufflers from their mopeds – now this has been banned. People have become nervous and react to loud noises painfully. Now we have got a little used to the war, we have begun to react more calmly to sounds. In the beginning, everyone was in constant tension.

How has the war affected and is it affecting your daily life?

You rethink your whole life. You wake up in the morning and immediately think: I am a happy person. I'm in my house. I can sleep relatively peacefully in my bed, I can sit in the kitchen, have a cup of tea or coffee in the morning and go to work quietly. Do not sit in the basement, evacuate ... About 8000 refugees from other regions are now registered in our city. On the street where my mother lives, a family of refugees from Severodonetsk settled in an empty house. The owners let them in for free. They only had to pay for utilities. The whole street donated items to the family. Whoever could, brought: sofas, an old TV ... Now they have moved out because they bought a house for themselves.

In Dnipro, after the start of the war, everyone was advised to seal the windows crosswise with adhesive tape so that if the glass broke, there would be fewer dangerous fragments. Windows with broken glass were simply boarded up. You walk down the street and you see boarded-up or taped windows. A creepy look ...

After the war began, we all began to sleep poorly. Sirens often sound at night. I live in a private house, and I can hear the

siren if the windows are open. But my colleagues – women who live in high-rise buildings – always hear them. They may sound at 1am or at 3am. Naturally, no-one can sleep. And if there is an explosion, there is no sleep. We adapted to doze off during the day at work, taking turns, just putting our heads down on the tables. If you constantly do not sleep at night, you simply cannot stand it. And no-one makes any comments to us.

We noticed that our memory started to fail. We began to forget just elementary words. In the beginning, I bought myself sedative pills. Now I don't take them any more. I'm used to this state ... Everyone also feels apathy. I don't want to do anything. I understand that I need to do something, and I can't. I bought myself a book before the war – I still haven't read it. A friend of mine who draws used to tell me, "You won't believe it, I can't bring myself to sit down to draw." Only recently, a year later, she gradually began to do something. And I recently started reading. My mother, a great optimist, also complains of apathy. Doctors and psychologists say that we all have some kind of post-traumatic syndrome. They advise you to do what you love. I love baking, so I bought myself pastry courses and grow my favorite tomatoes.

In autumn, shelling of infrastructure began. An oil depot 30 kilometres away from us was bombed. I heard explosions. The fire with black clouds of smoke lasted three days: if oil burns, it is difficult to extinguish.

It was a tough winter. Electricity was sometimes turned off for 9-10 hours a day. We had to save electricity. We stopped using electrical appliances: the microwave, the electric kettle. I took out an old kettle that we heated on a gas stove. For many, due to voltage

fluctuations in the network, electrical appliances were damaged. In stores, the only lights were at the checkouts. In the aisles, it was twilight. Large shopping centres were closed altogether. Some cafes worked simply by candlelight. I laughed and said to my girls (colleagues, ed.): I'm like a miner: I get up in the morning, put on a headlamp ... It was very cold during the blackouts. I slept with my clothes on. I pulled three blankets over myself, and a fur coat on top. In Dnipro, electric transport stopped running, only minibuses kept going. But they were not enough. It seems that the bus depot was bombed, and some buses had to be transferred from other regions.

From the very beginning of the war, people have been helping those at the front. My aunt's grandson is now serving near Bakhmut. Naturally, no-one knows where exactly. My aunt adapted like this: she sends parcels through Nova Poshta to a village, where the grandson can come and pick them up. Everyone does it. Since the beginning of the war, we have had a lot of volunteers. Bake, fry and transfer to the front. Many are engaged in collecting what is necessary for the front. For example, recently we collected empty cans from canned food



and made candles out of them. The boys collected electronic cigarettes and made devices from them, with the help of which mobile phones could be charged in the field. Our girls buy second-hand clothes for the wounded. Many of them are brought to hospitals, which now work as military hospitals (only maternity hospitals remained purely civilian). Clothes are not provided for wounded soldiers so it is collected by our volunteers.

Are air raid alarms common, and how do you react to them?

There are fewer now. And at the beginning of the war, they buzzed six and seven times a day. I didn't count. If a rocket flies, it is detected by radar. But at first it is not known where it flies, so they turn on the alarm in several areas at once. And they turn it off as it flies by, and its trajectory becomes clear. Now, although the sirens go off every day, there are fewer of them. Yesterday I heard two. Now there is an informant map on the Telegram channel, which can be used to track all the news, including where the missiles land and where the explosions are occurring.

Now I don't react to air sirens in any way. At the beginning of the war, there were no sirens, cars drove, and loudspeakers from them reported: "Air raid!" My son and I went down to the cellar a couple of times – a cramped room designed to store food; it is impossible to stay there for a long time.

Has the availability of food and basic necessities changed for you?

I'll tell you: food is more or less available in stores. The essentials are there. Prices, of course, have increased two to three times.



Can your children be mobilised and sent to the front? How do you feel about this?

My eldest son can be drafted into the army, and the youngest is studying. Those who study are not taken into the army. Now they are taking those who want to go [to fight]. The youngest son says, "If they come here, I'll join the army, Mum." The eldest doesn't say anything. We don't discuss it. We understand that you need to be able to fight with modern weapons, it is not easy, it takes a long time to learn. I think so: we need workers here as well. Now they are also in short supply.

Are there volunteers among your acquaintances?

Yes. I have a friend whose son volunteered in December. He told his mother: "My friends have been fighting for a long time; they are tired, they need a replacement." We now have a lot of women in the military, I think 15%, or even more, both in tank crews and in the artillery. Yesterday on TV they showed a 20-year-old girl who has been fighting since the very beginning of the war. She is a volunteer.

How do you feel about Russians? Honestly ...

Honestly? Well, how can I explain? Ukrainians hate them. What they have done is unforgivable. It's impossible to forgive. Half of Ukraine has been bombed. Many are dead. There are many orphans. Everyone has hatred, from grandmothers to young children. My son also says that this cannot be forgiven. I believe there are no good or bad nations. It's just that there are bad and good people. They are everywhere. Both with us and with the Russians. I know a Russian woman who lives in Lviv. She tells me: "I will now speak Ukrainian." I have other acquaintances, Russians, who live here and support Ukraine.

Thank you very much, Natasha. I wish you a speedy victory and an end to this terrible war.

800 people came to our concert; we couldn't believe it



Konstantin Sigachev

Foreword by the Editor-in-Chief. We recently interviewed Konstantin Sigachev, co-founder of rock band "Hit Pump", which is well known not only in Auckland, but throughout New Zealand. The conversation took place in the editorial office of "Inhabited Island" on February 24th. It was difficult to avoid the topic associated with this date. The interview spontaneously began discussing the war. Then we talked about the band, and about the creative activity of "Hit Pump".

Kostya, first of all, we want to thank you for agreeing to give us an interview. This is not just a courtesy. You know, we turned to several Russian bands that regularly perform on Auckland stages with a request to give us an interview

and received categorical refusals. Moreover, some of them have categorically forbidden us to post any material, including photographs, of their recent performances. What do you think is the reason? Fear? We are not in Moscow.

Yes, but many of our compatriots have not lost their connection with Moscow, with Russia, and people perceive this [publication of materials in the newspaper] as a potential burning of bridges. If they believe in our propaganda and the fact that there is unconditional support for the war among the compatriots around them, then it is probably scary. I consider it a privilege that we can talk openly on any topic that is now forbidden to talk about in Russia. This is my observation. I notice some people are frightened as hell about discussing the war in Ukraine. Others calmly talk about this topic, both from the stage and into the microphone.

Do you see silence as the norm?

Yes. Fear is a natural feeling, and it seems to me that it is difficult to blame a person for being scared. It's another matter if he tries to avoid this topic under the pretext of fear and pretends that nothing is happening: we are here, the war is there, and why should I waste my vital resources and energy to reflect on this. Then, of course, this is wrong. If this is a sincere, honest fear for myself and for my loved ones who remain in Russia, then it is probably difficult for me to condemn these people.

Thank you. Please tell us your own attitude to the war.

My attitude towards the war has not changed since February 24, 2022. And, moreover, I have been observing the situation in Ukraine since 2014, from the moment it all began. As I said in another interview, for me this topic began from the moment of the annexation of Crimea, from the moment of the covert entry of our troops into the Donbas, and then for me it became a very serious driver for the decision that I no longer want to live in Russia. Because the level of unpredictability of the government's actions then simply went off the scale. Starting from about 2011, I was opposition-minded, I began to go to rallies: to mass protests against fraudulent parliamentary elections at Sakharov Prospekt and

Bolotnaya Ploshchad. I then participated as an election during the campaign for presidential elections in 2012. That is, since 2011, I have been trying to show an active civic position, as it is commonly called. Now, the manifestation of an active civic position in Russia is impossible. In 2014, when I realised that the Russian government was not just stealing our resources, our money, funds for medicine for our retired grandparents, but also foreign territories (in the 21st century!), I realised that I did not want to live in such a country, I did not want my children to grow up here. I'll probably go somewhere. Yes, this was a serious driver of my departure in 2016. It took me and my family two years to prepare. By September 2016, we packed four large suitcases and flew to New Zealand. So, my attitude to the war certainly did not change. I unequivocally believe that Russia is the aggressor in this war, Russia is in a state of dictatorship, and its government is trying to gain some political points by annexing foreign territories, trying to stay in power, usurped since 2000. For me, it looks like this: political points multiplied by the madness of Vladimir Putin.

Did you have any other motives for emigrating?

Yes, this was not the only motive, but it was the main one. I think that the lack of the ability to change the regime in Russia and insane uncontrolled corruption I've had the opportunity to work with the public sector, not that directly, but I've seen it. I myself did not participate in any corruption schemes. But I saw it on paper, and I felt a little uneasy, because I realised how much money does not really reach the social spheres that should receive this money. Just at this point, my grandparents were approaching a rather old age, they needed constant medical supervision, and I saw how the system neglected them. At the same time, I saw palaces being erected on Rublevka (a Moscow residential area where Russia's ruling classes live Ed.). Probably, this was the main reason, the root one – dissatisfaction with the authorities, their irremovability. And then – this crazy adventure with the Crimea and Donbas ... – I understood, that's all. Corruption is killing people, but it kills covertly, it's not visible, not like a rocket hitting a house. When your government begins to physically destroy people, introducing its troops into the territory of another sovereign state and hiding behind the fact that separatist formations are operating there. Then – the story of the downed Malaysian Boeing ... another 300 lives ruined through the fault of our ... That is, you see, the red line was crossed by the implicit destruction of one's own people and the obvious destruction of one's fraternal one. I said to myself: "No, I don't want to live under this regime, I want to be away from all this."

Do you remember the moment the invasion of Ukraine began?

Yes, I remember very well. It was Thursday. I was very worried. I am subscribed to various Telegram channels, and there was information about explosions, not in the already familiar parts of Ukraine, but in non-occupied places, such as Kharkiv. I called my friend, a Ukrainian, who is from Kyiv, and asked him: what's going on with you? He answered: missiles flew at a military base in Kyiv. At first there was hope that this was some kind of mistake, some drunken major fired a multiple rocket launcher somewhere wrong, you know, anything can happen. But it soon became clear that – no, these messages went on and on. You begin to study and see that what is happening is what any army does at the beginning of an offensive. That is, it is trying to suppress any means of air defence. These were premeditated systematic actions. Now, after a year of war, we already know what followed. There was a double feeling: well, how so, it's unfair: again, once again, this hungry beast crushes another victim under itself ...

Were you shocked by what happened?

Yes, I was. I felt guilty to some extent. When in 2011 we went to Bolotnaya, I was surrounded by wonderful guys, the flower of the liberal opposition. After all, then we could reach the Kremlin. The police did not interfere then, they behaved as politely as possible and did not interfere with anything. Probably, they themselves did not know what to do, there was no National Guard, there were no laws banning rallies, EVERYTHING WAS POSSIBLE. We didn't break any law. Navalny came out and started shouting: "let's take on the Kremlin!" And no sniper shot him. It was so free compared to today's times...

And what could have been the result of Navalny's appeal? I can't really imagine...

You know, there were 50,000 people there. It was possible to climb over the walls of the Kremlin (as a last resort). And most likely, the gates would have been opened.

Of course, it is very difficult now to say what was done right and what was wrong. I must say that then going to rallies seemed like some kind of unnatural pastime. I wanted to meet friends, have a good time, and do the work I loved. All these guys went out on a cold December day because they were genuinely unhappy with what was happening. But at the demonstration there was some confusion. I experienced it, and I saw other demonstrators were confused. But if we had been told then, in 2011, that Putin would attack Ukraine, then I think all this liberal crowd would have taken off their liberal masks and taken on the Kremlin. I think so. Immediately after



Bolotnaya, they began to tighten the screws. After the next demonstration in May, several people were imprisoned. It was a precedent. At the present time, this is nothing at all, and in those still relatively free times, these real jail sentences caused a shock. Now, despite all the defeats they are suffering in Ukraine, this government is holding on, kept afloat by propaganda and fear. Propaganda sows the image of an enemy who all our troubles are blamed on.

Kostya, do you discuss this topic in your group? Do you have a mutual understanding?

Thank God, yes. Absolutely, including with former members of the band. Now there are four of us, and there are seven people in total. Half of their avatars have the Ukrainian flag; the rest also share our attitude to the war. You know, when it all started, I had no doubts about how the guys would react to it. When we met, long before February 24, 2022, we immediately found a common language, we have common interests, common creative tasks. We have never supported the current government of the Russian Federation. If you had asked me a question in 2021, do you think anyone in your group would support a war if it broke out in a year's time? I would say with confidence: No.

It's very nice to hear that here, among us in New Zealand, there are young guys who just got together for joint creativity, and then it turned out that they were all from this side. So, there are not so few of us.

If you follow our repertoire, you probably noticed that at every concert we sing opposition songs, take, for example, the song of the group "Kino" – "Changes", which is now considered the anthem of the opposition. This despite some of (influential Soviet singer and songwriter Ed.) Viktor Tsoi's songs now being brazenly stolen and sung in Luzhniki (Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium, where the Kremlin has staged rallies in support of the war in Ukraine Ed.). Choi, seeing this, would probably have turned over in his grave. He was a pacifist. He opposed the war, and it is monstrous that his work is used, distorted. The words he sang are now being repeated, but they are being directed in the other direction, in support of the war. For us, this is a serious test, because we ask ourselves: if this song was sung in Luzhniki just yesterday, can we play it at a concert tomorrow? This song is stolen. Stolen from Viktor Tsoi! Probably the answer is: yes, we will play, we will not let them steal it. Let them do whatever they want in Luzhniki; we will sing these songs in the name of peace and put into our performance the meaning with which they were written.

This is a difficult time for the group, but it is a great happiness that we are all on the same wavelength in the team. This greatly simplifies our work.

I am very happy for you, just from the bottom of my heart, tell us how your group came to be.

When we were going to move to New Zealand, I had a dream to assemble a team here, play Russian rock and perform to audiences of 40-50 people. I talked about it to my wife. She reminded me of it later: look, as you said, it happened. It's funny that gathering an audience of 40-50 people was the limit of my dreams. In June 2021, 800 attended our concert at The Powerstation. We couldn't believe it. This is a large audience, and this event has become significant for us. We planned this concert back in 2020, but Covid struck, and the concert had to be cancelled. In the end, we did it a year later. This is our biggest concert so far. I don't know if we will be able to repeat this. The recording of the concert is on YouTube. If you type Hit Pump on YouTube, you will find it and you can watch it.

Now there are artists and rock musicians who are silent. Unfortunately, there are also artists who are not only silent, but also perform in Russia at Z-festivals and directly declare their support for the so-called Special Military Operation. Many of these groups immediately broke up for obvious reasons, and only their leaders perform. I still draw a line between those who openly support the war and those who are silent. They are silent and it is unknown what views are held. But I am still have hopes for those who are silent.

Kostya, have you performed in Russia?

I have had several bands which performed in Russia. I started to play the violin at the age of six, thanks to my parents. I graduated from music school with a degree in violin. My parents like the bard culture – songwriters singing their own songs – they are madly in love with it. Since childhood, I have absorbed the love of music, including songs sung by their writers. My mother and I often have disputes on this topic. After all, in such a song, the key aspect is the text. For me, as a person who played the violin, I have probably always focused on the musical component. Sometimes it's hard for me to listen to some things that are a little primitive for me musically. I do not detract from the power of lyrics at all, but for me sometimes the development of harmony based on three chords is not enough. Of course, I do not consider all singer-songwriters are the same brush. Some sing songs with a wonderful musical component. I begin to understand this culture and with age I understand more and more how strong the emotional load of the text is and how important it is. I'm growing up and reconsidering my views.

During my school years, and then at the university, I had a band. We performed, but there was a maximum of 100 people in the audience. In general, I always liked it very much, I always saw myself in a rock band. It seems to me that if it were not for my main profession, IT, which provides a reliable and

guaranteed income, if I were a little more romantic, I would have gone on tour with the band. Now I'm almost 35, and I realised that my family is so important to me that I'm not going anywhere. I want to see my son every morning.

Tell us more about your current group?

Igor is from Moscow, Ilya is from Vladivostok, Dima is also from the Far East, Vova is from St Petersburg. Cool guys.

When I came to New Zealand, I bought myself a guitar and started playing. Then I slowly began to get acquainted with different people and started bringing a guitar to different parties. People liked it. Once I was invited to a party of guitarists. There were guys with guitars, there were five or six guitars. We sat and played. Igor and Ilya were there. We sat, played and listened, which was very good. We exchanged phone numbers. We got together again. Then again, this time with drums. We quickly found a drummer, Vova, who lived next door to Ilya.

Do you know what influenced you a lot?

The fact that we immediately decided to do everything to a high standard. For us, quality has become a priority. We try to become a authentic of what the original author wanted to

convey to the audience. It is important to convey the smallest intonations, everything down to the finest details. We could work on one song for quite a long time, to refine it. For the first time we were preparing a concert, an acoustic concert in the restaurant "Vodka Room" as the opening act for Russian singer Alyona Apina. It was quite a successful performance. Eighty people attended the second concert in the "Vodka Room"; we had expected 40.

We did our first electric concert in 2019 at the Winchester Club. A total of 215 people came to this concert, despite us expecting only about 100. We couldn't believe it. It felt as if a full house had been assembled. The next concert was two months later, when 400 people came. Then I realised that we were doing something interesting, unlike what others were doing. We also perform at small private events, such as birthday parties..

How do you define the genre you're performing?

Russian rock.

How can you define this genre, its specificity?

I think Russian rock belongs to the era of the late 1980s – to the end of the noughties. More precisely, everything that was released after 2005-2006, I cannot classify for myself as Russian rock. An era has passed. The mood with which these songs were written is gone. The direction was non-commercial. People just gathered and sang from the heart. Another feature of Russian rock is that it's a protest against the style



of Soviet pop music. Yes, these are protest hooligan texts, somehow they are frivolous. Those were the times when all this was new, when there was still no rock in the country. And then suddenly there were people who began to make it. It is original, both from a musical and textual point of view. Russian rock is also characterised by contextual things. For example: "Dawn – there is no way out, turn the key – you need to write – in some notebook with blood, like in the metro ...". After all, it is only in our metro that such signs are red. That is, it is a context that is understandable only to its own. Just as in the American country and other genres, there is a lot of context that is incomprehensible to us aliens. There is a lot of context in authors' songs. It is not always clear to me, probably because I no longer belong to the era in which they were written. My mother can understand quotes from songs, movies ...

How often do you rehearse?

In the off-season, when we are not preparing for a concert, we have rehearsals once a week. When we prepare several events with different repertoires, we can rehearse three times a week. We used to rehearse in the so-called rehearsal base. This is the territory, for example, of a former factory, where rooms are equipped with excellent acoustic insulation. Groups practically do not hear each other. We have invested in special equipment, in-ear monitors, which allow you to rehearse with headphones, while the sound is practically inaudible to outsiders. The rehearsal looks like this: two guitarists in the corner with guitars, the drummer is hitting some rubber thing with all his might, two "fools" yelling into microphones, not connected anywhere. And we have monitors in our ears, and we hear all the guitars that go right and left, bass, drums, all the nuances of sound, everything is exactly as it will be heard by the audience at the concert. Now



we rehearse just in the garage, while not interfering with anyone.

Is it a professional system?

Yes, it is a professional system. We look at how professionals do things, we try to follow all the innovations. We must preserve our brand, the high quality. This explains why people turn to us for help with audio-video, we even opened a small business – we rent equipment and do sound engineering. I am sure that Ilya is the best Russian-speaking sound engineer in New Zealand. He's insanely talented.

We all have full-time jobs. For all of us, "Hit Pump" is a hobby. But we want to imagine a little bit what it would be like if we were doing it for real. If you could live a couple of lives in a parallel universe ...

Why do you think you're not really doing it?

I don't know, probably because to be a real rock star, you need to change your life very much, abandon the usual circle of acquaintances, friends, start going on tours. Sometimes we try on the role of a rock star ...

Do you want to feel like rock stars?

We would like to test the water

I'm already 35, I'm past the age of 27 at which Kurt Cobain died. Do you know what that means? This is a magical age. Many rock stars die at this age. In most cases, this is drug-related. We don't want to be THAT kind of rock stars. We want to feel like rock stars at concerts, but in real life we are ordinary guys.

Russians of New Zealand, help Ukraine!

Foreword by the Editor-in-Chief. Every day, Russian missiles and bombs, launched and dropped on the orders of Putin and his generals, explode in the long-suffering land of Ukraine. Civilians are dying, houses, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure are being destroyed. From the very beginning of the war, initiative groups have formed in the Russian community of New Zealand, organising the collection of funds for assistance to Ukrainians affected by the war. Unfortunately, these groups are few. But the significance of their activities is difficult to overestimate. It is very important for us to know that not all Russians are ruscists (a combination of the words Russian and fascist Ed.). The war in Ukraine has been going on for over a year, but our activists do not stop, do not suspend their important mission. "Inhabited Island" regularly publishes information about fundraising events, conducted by Russian activists in New Zealand in favour of Ukraine. In this publication, we introduce readers to some of the results of this activity.



Elena Nikiforova

Another charity fair was held at the Nathan Homestead estate, organised by the Russian-speaking public group Russian-speaking Integrity Alliance NZ (RSANZ), on April 1.

The fair was held as part of the World of Cultures event organised by the Auckland City Council. On this day, concerts of folklore music and dance, shows, souvenir making workshops, art exhibitions and national dishes of various peoples of the globe

inhabiting our multinational cosmopolitan city were held in all cultural centres of Auckland.

We were invited to take part in the celebration by the management of the Nathan estate – they liked our previous charity sale of pastries in December 2022 so much (especially our famous honey cake) that they themselves invited us to take part and even gave us a great place on the second floor of the estate completely free of charge – a large spacious room with a kitchen.

Visitors were happy to treat themselves to delicious pies with meat, pilaf, tasted Kazakh dessert, tried Prague cake, and, of course, honey cake was a bestseller! In just a few hours (from 10am to 2pm) we managed to raise \$3022! All the funds we earned at the fair were again (as in December 2022) transferred to hospital No. 16 in the city of Dnipro in Ukraine. The hospital is overcrowded with seriously injured children and adults, who are sent to this hospital from all over the country. The hospital lacks literally everything. Any, even the smallest donation, can help save someone's life.

From recent correspondence with the administration of hospital No. 16 in Dnepropetrovsk:

21 February 2023, 03:12:11, from "Lena Nikiforova" <e.nikiforova@auckland.ac.nz>:

Dear Oleg Yosipovych and Yulia Viktorivna!

Please accept our deep condolences and sincere sympathy to the residents of Dnipro and all patients of your hospital in need of urgent treatment and operations!

We, the representatives of the Integrity Alliance NZ group, consisting of Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand, would like to transfer financial assistance to your hospital again.

We have already transferred one sum to your hospital's account in December 2022. I am attaching a PDF with the



Activists of the Russian-speaking Integrity Alliance (RSIA NZ).

From left to right: Katya Burges, Nadia Dikareva, Lena Nikiforova, Natasha Bout. Photo by Lena Nikiforova.

details of your bank to which we transferred the money in December.

You can ask to check if these are the correct details, and if not, send us an account number where we can transfer financial assistance to you.

Also, if you could confirm that you received our transfer in December, your confirmation would help us continue to collect donations and transfer money to your hospital.

Thank you very much in advance, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Yours sincerely,

Lena, Natasha and Alla

Answer. Good afternoon, thank you for your sympathy and material support of our hospital in this difficult time. The

details of the hospital in the letter are correct, We send a confirmation of receipt of funds.

Last December, at our first fair at Nathan Manor, we raised a total of \$NZ3300.

Of this amount, \$NZ1650 (\$US1022.77) was transferred to Hospital No. 16 in Dnipro.

\$NZ1650 were listed by Dmytro Lahoda.

Readers of our newspaper are already familiar with Dmytro. At the beginning of the war, he volunteered for the front and, at the age of 30, took command of a military unit in the first separate tank brigade. In the hardest battle near Chernihiv, he, as a commander and a person, showed true heroism in leading the fighting and saving his unit. He carried his comrades out of the shelling in his arms until he was wounded by an exploding tank shell. A shell fragment struck him from behind, broke up in his abdominal cavity into many parts, injuring his spine and internal organs. Pieces of metal from the exploding shell inside it got stuck in his bones and soft tissues, which led to



Charity Fair, April 1, 2023, RSIA NZ Group. Another fundraiser to help Dmytro Lagoda. Photo by the author

transplant operation is needed, as well as long-term rehabilitation. The situation is complicated by the fact that, according to the conclusion of doctors, the operation to remove fragments can be carried out only in a state of long-term remission, which has not yet occurred.

Money is needed to pay for the upcoming operation, postoperative rehabilitation, etc. We are trying to help Dmytro raise the funds necessary to bring him back to life.

Vladislav Sinyakhovsky is a psychiatrist. Before the war, Vladislav lived in Kyiv and worked in

his specialty. He was fond of mountaineering. From the first days of the war, Vladislav's life, as well as the lives of millions of his fellow citizens, changed dramatically. Vladislav volunteered for the front.

Vladislav devoted his activity to the search and rescue of seriously wounded from the battlefield. It was Vladislav who found and saved Dmytro, whose body was covered with earth and showed no signs of life. If it weren't for Vladislav, Dmytro would have died on the battlefield ...



Receipt confirming the receipt of \$US1800 on April 11, 2023, by Hospital No. 16 in Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk)

serious complications: intestinal perforation, infection of the bones of the spine, osteomyelitis, infection and paralysis.

After a series of operations carried out in hospitals in Chernihiv and Kyiv, Dmytro was taken to a hospital in Gothenburg (Sweden), where he is at this time, balancing between life and death for a long time.

As a result of the operations, the rectum was completely removed, and the intestinal stoma was fitted. An intestinal



Receipt confirming the receipt of funds for medical care for Dmytro Lahoda

From the very beginning of the war, Vladislav has been continuously on the front line as part of the International Legion of Territorial Defence of Ukraine. He does a great job of bringing back to life soldiers seriously wounded in battle. He helps soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder, and also works with seriously injured soldiers who have returned from captivity. His group's ambulances search for and extract wounded soldiers from the front line, providing first aid and delivering them to hospitals.

Vladislav's group is in dire need of the necessary equipment, reconnaissance devices, funds for repairs, petrol and other

needs. Members have to travel a lot, and volunteers often pay for expenses such as petrol costs.

We plan to start collecting donations for Vladislav both through the members of the group and through social networks. We also hope to hold another baking fair and transfer the collected funds to Vladislav and Dmytro Lahoda.

If you want to help Vladislav, you can transfer money to the account of our RSIA NZ group in New Zealand, and we will transfer your donations to Vladislav's card. Donations to Vladislav should be sent to:

Account Number:

06-0359-0166090-28

Account name: Natalia Booth

Ref: Ukraine V Sinyakhovski

You can also contact Vladislav directly and ask him personally to what account to transfer your donation to him:

Vladislav's FB profile: <https://www.facebook.com/vladislav.synyahovskyy>

Here's his Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/synyahovsky/>

If you want to take part in the charitable activities of our group with volunteer work, donations, baking, selling your crafts or just ideas and moral support – join RSIANZ on Facebook or Instagram, and write to us on Messenger!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/474401104164113>

<https://www.instagram.com/rsianz/>

Slavic festival in Wellington



Natalia Belyaeva

On February 18, Wellington hosted the first festival of culture of the Slavic and Balkan peoples in the history of New Zealand. Many people know about Polish Christmas markets in November-December, many in the old days of peace came to Russian festivals (and old-timers remember Russian songs being sung at Ukrainian festivals, and vice versa), and for many years crowds of spectators gathered at a variety of

events where Balkan-Slavic-Gypsy sounds were heard. But a festival in which a way was found to bring these groups together had never happened before. That was a dream. The organiser of the festival, Irina Mosina, said the dream had been around for a long time. The idea had long been nurtured. The event itself was postponed several times due to lockdowns, and until the last moment it was unclear whether people would attend. However, they didn't simply attend, but turned up in droves – Dom Polski in the suburb of Newtown was overcrowded. There were not enough seats at the tables, and pancakes, Polish "pierogi" (large dumplings), sausages and pies sold like hotcakes.

When they were still behind closed doors arranging dishes on the tables, setting up microphones and adjusting stands at 10am, the participants made fun of themselves. Why? Well, they said, at least we'll have fun ourselves, maybe there will be a dozen or three spectators. The doors opened at 10:30am and it immediately became clear why. I stood at the entrance, behind me was a stand about the history of Slavic peoples and languages. The public came up, read, and were keenly interested. My family is from Slovenia, do you have anything

about the Slovenian language here? Do you use the same alphabet as ours? Can I take the brochure to a friend, she will read it at home? And what kind of pattern is this? From which country? And on your dress – it looks like our Ukrainian embroidery, but a little different ... Do you make bracelets? – Oh no, the Bulgarians, well, then I'll just take the lolly ... Can I have one for my daughter? Oh, there are colouring pages here, how interesting, thanks...

Nearby was an exhibition of works by the children's Sunday school "The Source" at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Wellington. Children come up, paint, look at patterns, learn the unfamiliar word "ochelye" (headband). On one panel – the history of the school and pages from a grammar book, which Wellington children use to learn to read and write. While the children drew, parents talked with teachers – many for the first time were surprised to learn that such a school has existed for more than 10 years.

On the next table was a Bulgarian grammar book. The Bulgarian letters are the same as in the Russian alphabet, but some of the pictures are unexpected because the names of object differ. And Virgin from the Bulgarian icon has a most affectionate look. I would like to hope that her protection will be enough for all those gathered here.

And music, eight hours of music. Polish tunes from Krakerjack, Bulgarian dances from Bulgarian Roses, 11



songs in 11 different languages from Vox Ethno, not all Slavic, but spiritually close and culturally integral Yiddish from Klezmer Rebs, sultry and mesmerising songs by the Balkany group, then gentle, then dashing brass instruments by the Niko Ne Zna band, and a waltz-disco megajam of everything to the song "Black Eyes". We danced, ruining our shoes until our heels hurt, and it was beautiful.



A Polish flag was on one wall – Dom Polski invited everyone to visit. The Bulgarian flag was opposite. No Russian flag was in sight – it was not a time to brag about it. The Ukrainian flag was also not visible – although I would have liked to see a Ukrainian table at this festival. According to the organisers, they invited, planned, but did not have enough resources.

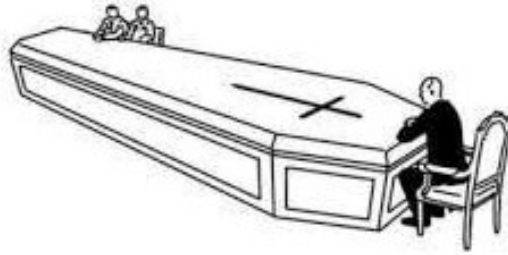
Representatives of the Ukrainian community of Wellington clarify they did not have enough resources, all their strength



was spent on weekly events, raising money, helping their refugees and families in Ukraine. They came to the festival to relax and to be distracted. It is gratifying to see them. It's joyful that they don't turn away, and at the same time it hurts – I came here, turning off the war in my head, but is everyone given the luxury of turning it off? And I really want to turn it off. I also understood this from the words of friends and relatives from Russia. In response to the video from the festival, they wrote to me – How glad we are that this is happening! How wonderful that such a thing is possible. Peace! We wish you artistic success and peace to all! I left, making a wish: God willing, let this not be the last such festival. Next time, let the audience fill the streets, and there will be more countries, and languages, and songs. And let there be a Ukrainian table.



- Tell a joke about Putin? – No, you don't. – Why? – Because it's no longer funny ...



[www. vesty. co. il/main/article/synaj4fzq](http://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/synaj4fzq)

Adam is hiding behind a fig leaf, and Putin is hiding behind a laurel leaf (a play on the family name of Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. (Lavr means laurel in Russian).

- Have you heard? Putin is dead!
- And what?
- It was a banal death: he choked on Ukraine.

Fortune teller to Putin: – I see you riding in a limousine, on Red Square. Everyone applauds, rejoices, laughs, dances and waves to you. A huge celebration.

"And me?" asks Putin. "Am I waving back?"

- I don't see this, the coffin is closed.
 - I know how to avoid defeat.
- Putin: – How?
- Shoot yourself and say that it was according to plan!

Putin asked Zelensky to return a couple of tanks for the May 9 parade.

Macron called on plastic surgeons to provide botox to save face for Putin, although for him the best option to save face is to shoot himself in the heart.

In civilised countries, the Constitution guarantees a regular change of power. In Russia, the authorities guarantee regular changes to the Constitution.

Source: <https://etnosvit.com/anekdoty/pro-putina.html>

The national idea that unites Russians is to outlive Putin.

- Do you want Russia to repeat the misery of the '90s? asks Putin.
- Yes, Vladimir Vladimirovich, we already do.

Putin promised to fulfil the wish of the three children who took part in the "Christmas tree of wishes" campaign.

A 13-year-old girl expressed a desire to see the ballet "Swan Lake". (This is a reference to the ballet being screened on television during the 1991 coup after which the Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, was effectively sidelined. Ed.)

- Putin proposed to raise the subsistence minimum by as much as 1000 rubles (\$NZ20 a month)!
- It would be better if he proposed to lower the subsistence maximum by a couple of billion ...

Do you want me to tell you a joke about Putin?

- No.
- Why?
- Because it's no longer funny.

Source: <https://www.anekdot.ru/tags/%D0%9F%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD>

Школа
Русский для детей



The school "Russian for kids" invites school-age children to study Russian language, literature, mathematics, history and acting. Classes in small groups.

More information about the school: www.russianforkids.co.nz, <https://www.facebook.com/russianforkids.co.nz/>
aboutlgabelokon@russianforkids.co.nz



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