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**Andrii Stoykiv**

Postgraduate student,
Department of the World History and Religious Study,
Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University (Ukraine)
mobi079@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1514-1132>

Андрій Стойків

Аспірант,
Кафедра всесвітньої історії та релігієзнавства,
Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет
імені Володимира Гнатюка (Україна)

HAIRD VS BALDHEAD: CONTACT BETWEEN “METALHEADS” AND “GOPNIKS” IN SOVIET UKRAINE, 1987–1991

Summary. The aim of the research. The paper highlights main aspects of contacts between members of subculture of Heavy Metal music and youth culture of “gopniks”, conflict between them. The article analyzes process of contact and that aftermath for forming of narrative of culture in Soviet Ukraine and in Ukraine since 1991. It rated the role of contact for forming of youth culture space of Ukraine after collapse of the USSR. The research methodology is based on the usage of general-scientific methods, special historical methods (chronological, comparative), Synchronic method of linguistic (used for highlight main meaning of “Gopniks” slang) and Empiric knowledge. The scientific novelty demonstrates revision of contact between “Metalheads” and “Gopniks” in late Soviet Ukraine (1987–1991) and independent Ukraine (1991–2000) and meaning of this for development of culture of modern Ukraine in new millennium. Conclusions: The paper highlights aftermaths for modern Ukrainian culture of contact between “Metalheads” and “Gopniks”. The development of contact and conflicts between them is analyzed. The view of the corresponding process that started from conflict between young “Metalheads” and “Gopniks” and ended by forming a cultural platform for modern culture in Ukraine is created.

Keywords: Ukrainian SSR, Ukraine, counterculture, contact between cultures, Metalheads, Gopniks.

ПАТЛАТИ ПРО ЧОТКИХ: КОНТАКТ МІЖ “МЕТАЛІСТАМИ” ТА “ГОПНИКАМИ” В РАДЯНСЬКІЙ УКРАЇНІ, 1987–1991

Анотація. Мета дослідження. У статті висвітлено основні аспекти контакту між представниками субкультури Хеві Метал музики і культурою молоді – “Гопниками”, конфлікт між ними. Проаналізовано процес контакту та його наслідки для формування культурного нарративу в УРСР і в Україні з 1991 р. Подано оцінку ролі відповідного контакту для формування культурного простору молоді в Україні після розпаду СРСР. Методологія праці базується на використанні загальнонаукових методів, особливих історичних методах (хронологічний, компаративний), синхронічному лінгвістичному методі (використано для висвітлення основних значень сленгу “Гопників”) й емпіричний досвід. Наукова новизна: продемонстровано перегляд контакту між “Металістами” та “Гопниками” в пізній УРСР (1987–1991) та незалежній Україні (1991–2000), його значення для розвитку культури сучасної України в новому міленіумі. Висновки: Висвітлено наслідки контакту між “Металістами” та “Гопниками” для культури сучасної України. Проаналізовано розвиток контакту та конфлікту між ними. Створено картину відповідного процесу, який розпочався з конфлікту між молоддю “Металістів” та “Гопників” і завершився формування культурного підґрунтя для культури сучасної України.

Ключові слова: УРСР, Україна, контркультура, міжкультурний контакт, Металісти, Гопники.

Problem Statement. Nowadays culture is influenced by many counterculture elements. For example, heavy metal music was countercultural movement in music back to 1970s, nowadays we have heavy metal music as part of culture, maybe mainstream culture. This made metaphysical issue of culture in modern world, Ukraine, in that case, isn’t an exclusion.

Analysis of the research. Mainly, contact between Metalheads and Gopniks isn’t investigated in Ukrainian academic history, some aspects was highlighted in cultural investigations but they’re don’t give us a view of problem in general. Mostly points of contact between Metalheads and Gopniks, and aftermaths of that contact, were highlighted in fiction like “Cult” (Lybko Deresh, 2001) or “Idolaty to Reptile” (Lybko

Deresh, 2002), in same case “Pacyky” (Anatoly Dnistrovuy, 2005) and articles with different scientific level in internet (Choma, 2001).

Purpose of the article is to make view of aftermaths of contact between Metalheads and Gopniks in late Ukrainian SSR (1987–1991) and Ukraine (1991–2000) for development of culture in modern Ukraine. To make narrative of that process in general. Make basis for next deeper and more fundamental investigation.

Presenting main material of research. The time for Perestroika in the USSR was marked by a number of social changes, among which the counter-cultural movements, which were called “subculture”. The most part of them was taken from West, mainly from USA and GB. Beginning in the late 1970s, the USSR began to gain popularity rock and heavy metal music with which closely associated subcultures that were sometimes called “Haired”. In the last years of 1980s, the corresponding subcultures became massive not only in the USSR, but also in Ukrainian SSR (Crucial 1980th, 2014).

Alongside this, internal counter-cultural movements of the youth were formed, in particular, so-called, “Gopniks”. Etymology of word “Gopnik” is still subject of discussion, because there is no consensual or obvious definition for that word. Among the numerous hypotheses are the following:

- At the end of XIX century, in St. Petersburg the State Society of Charity was organized, where children were cared for small hooliganism and theft. Accordingly, the abbreviation of the institution G.O.P. gave the name to children – “gopnik”(Sindalovsky, 2009);

- In the Russian slang is synonymous with the word “robbery” – “gop-stop”. Same-name was a rather popular song written in the genre “Russian Chanson” by Alexander Rosenbaum, which was recorded on the album in 1982. “In Memory of Arcadia Sevenogo”. The relevant song and musical genre were quite widespread among the gopnik. On the basis of this fact it is possible to assume the probability of restoration of the word “gopnik” precisely to people – representatives of the corresponding counterculture (Crucial 1980th, 2014).

The image of a rocker or metalist in the USSR was not particularly different from the Western-borrowed specimen.

The image of Gopnik, contrarily, was not widespread outside the USSR. Usually, they were young people who had bowed and shaved, or left very short hair. They are dressed in a cheap sport clothing, which was usually pirate “adidas / reebok / puma / other brand of sportswear”, shoes or sneakers, or shoes, cap “duck”(Gasevskaya, 2016).

Gopniks adhered to criminal behavior, including hooliganism, petty robbery, and violence (both physical and moral).

Typically, gopniks performed gop-stops in relation to “weak victims” – people with a non-athletic figure, often in glasses for sight. Rarely victims became casual walkers. Gopnik called his victims “loh” (Deresh, 2002).

Gopniks rarely named themselves like “Gopnik” so much that the word “pacan” was used. By this word they also called other boys / men who were not members of the gopnik.

Among the Gopniks was a certain gradation of cool, which was called “chetkost”. The more a pacan was corresponded to the image and behavior of the gopnik, the more he was cool, respectively, had greater authority within his company (Deresh, 2001).

Unlike rockers and metalheads, gopniks gathered in groups of 3 or more people, which was their element of communication – to survive together. They gathered in the courtyards near houses where they spent their free time, practicing, mainly, either by drinking alcohol, or by “gop-stop” passers-by, unpleasant people (Choma, 2001).

However, among the Gopniks of the Time of Perestroika, there was a separate category, the so-called “Luber” (from the name of the city in the Moscow region –

“Lyubertsy”). They differed from other gopniks of open hostility to all the western culture. They radicalized in the subculture of the Gopniks the irreconcilability with the appearance of other and Western music and clothing (Gromov, 2006).

Representatives of the Gopniks, as a rule, position themselves as “anti-subculture”, one of the main ideas was “not stand out among the masses” (Gasevskaya, 2016). This was the first reason that conflicts arose. Most conflicts between gopniks and rockers / metalheads were due to the long hair of others. It looked like this: The rocker or metalist goes through one of the yards on the territory of which there are gopnikov. They meet his gaze, approach him (in the majority of them it was the men) with the shout of “o-pa-cha” and surround them. They ask him the question: “Hey pacan! Why do you have long hair?” Whatever the rocker answered, it ended with a fight, sometimes with the use of cold weapons, which led to injuries of varying severity, rarely to death, and robbery of the victim (Gasevskaya, 2016; Crucial 1980th, 2014).

There was a certain dislike for the musicians. Goping for themselves as representatives of the criminal world, the Gopniks loved the “Russian Chanson,” which was quite rooted in the criminal environment of the USSR and remained after its collapse (Choma, 2001). Any western music (sometimes, western pop music) was seen as something unworthy for their society. If the passerby was not particularly long hair, however, carrying any rock / heavy metal album with him was enough, this was a good reason for the “gop-stop” (Crucial 1980th, 2014).

Later, when in the USSR economic problems and poverty came to a peak (1989–1991), the gop-stops moved on to the appearance before the theft of money or even food. Widespread among Gopniks were the phrases: “Is there 500 rubles? And if I find it !?” or “Are you sorry for the pacans?” It was at this time that conflicts with the Gopniks in the USSR gained the greatest magnitude (Gromov, 2006; Crucial 1980th, 2014).

Due to the increase in the number of conflicts with gopniks, part of rockers and metalheads began to “mask” the representatives of the appropriate subculture to reduce the risk of street harassment from the first (Deresh, 2002).

On the other hand, some Gopniks met closer to Western music and ceased to be so radical to musical preferences and clothes of other people. Some of them began to listen to classical rock bands like The Beatles (Gasevskaya, 2016), Bon Jovi (Very Wonderful, 2011) and others. Something like this happened with heavy metal music. Evidence of this is the viral online video “Lute Kipish with Bass” where Gopnik talks about the death metal band Obituary (Fierce uproar with Bass, 2010). However, this was not a rule in the Gopnik subculture (Choma, 2001).

The aversion to rock and heavy metal music was also caused by ignorance of foreign languages by gopniks. In this aspect, the fans of the Russian rock and heavy metal (which also included a significant part of the rock music of the Ukrainian SSR and Ukraine after 1991) were more coherent with the Gopnik.

In the time of the USSR there was no gradation among Gopniks according to the ethnic principle. Gopnik from the Ukrainian SSR was identified from the state of the RSFSR or the BSSR. These were people who were not, at that time, identified from national movements, on the contrary, if these people were interested in politics, it was pro Soviet (Gromov, 2006). However, as a rule, gopniks did not care about political issues. In this regard, most gopniks resembled a large part of rockers and metalists, who were also not very worried about political issues (except for rejection of the Soviet authorities to accept rock and heavy metal music, which forced the latter to go into a kind of “opposition” to Soviet power).

On the other hand, within the Ukrainian SSR, the Gopnik subculture developed unevenly. Kind of Gopniks like “Lyubertsy” in the Ukrainian SSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s were less. They were concentrated on large cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro (then Dnipropetrovsk) (Crucial 1980th, 2014). Others, like Gopniks,

were called “Beadles”, “Ragulis”, “Khlobs”, and, as a rule, they were people who were only similar to the Gopniks on the outside, in the rest, they were poverty that they could not, or did not want to look “Western” (Jeans, white short-sleeved shirts, fashion jackets and other clothing that was associated with the West). The popularization of the “Russian chanson” in the Ukrainian SSR did not actually happen, it was, rather, the trends of the 1990’s, while, in the megacities of popularity, the music was acquired in the middle of the decade, in small regional centers in the late 1990’s, and in smaller settlements in the early 2000’s. Before this “Russian chanson” replaced the Soviet pop stage (Choma, 2001).

If we step back from the yard of the criminal behavior of the youth of the Ukrainian SSR during the time of perestroika, we observe that most of them looked “Western” and listened to rock and heavy metal music. Long hair for men was popular. This was especially noticeable in small oblast centers of the Ukrainian SSR, such as Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lutsk, Rivne, Chernivtsi, etc. In large cities, the beginning of the stylization of youth under the Gopnik began in the last years of the 1980’s, more active at the beginning of the new decade. This was mainly due to the overwhelming poverty of the population at that time (Crucial 1980th, 2014). However, this process accelerated with the achievement of independence in 1991 and in the middle of the decade, the Gopnik subculture gained its peak in Ukraine with all the features that are described above.

At first, the Gopniks of the Ukrainian SSR did not pay particular attention to the appearance, and especially to music. The main idea was hooliganism and petty robbery. Basically they stole the money, later, with the proliferation of players, they tried to steal them, usually using the phrase: “Hey pacan! Give me a listen!” If the potential victim gave the player a hand to Gopnik, then this thing was “confiscated”, and given the problems with the law enforcement agencies at that time, the return of the thing in a legitimate way caused a number of complexities that often made it impossible for the relevant process (Crucial 1980th, 2014).

With the mass spread of the Gopnik subculture in Ukraine after 1991. the conflict between subcultures that took their origins from the west and gopnik deepened. The reasons for this were unchanged – the crisis of the economy of post-Soviet Ukraine, from which, besides all, the leak took another reason – the spread of criminal behavior among young people, raising the general criminal level in line with the problem of alcoholism and drug addiction at this time. This led to problems in families where parents were interested in other care than in care and education of them children. Usually these problems were reduced to administrative or criminal liability. Often, parents were fed with surrogate alcohol, which was a through phenomenon of the 1990s, sometimes leading to death from overdose. Family violence also took place. All of this shaped the nihilistic and misanthropic views of the youth towards other people who, together with poverty, demanded that they survive rallying together, relying on internal rules and aggression against others, in combination with small-scale criminal offenses. It is at this time that the “Russian Chanson” with its, often criminal lyricism, replaces pop or rock / heavy metal music (Choma, 2001; Crucial 1980th, 2014).

This situation continued until the beginning of digitalization of society in the late 2000s and early 2010, especially with the expansion of the Internet. Gradually, all this became irrelevant. Most of the Gopniks, who were interested in politics, switched over to skinheads in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Part of the Gopniks of the 1990s was scattered among rock and metal music, rap and electronic music, often mixing all of these genres of music. Another part, due to their lifestyle, died of diseases of the internal organs caused by overweight alcoholism, who were injured by street fights (Gasevskaya, 2016).

Conclusion: The main result of the contact between the “haired” and “Baldheads” in the Ukrainian SSR during the time of the Perestroika was the formation of a cultural

plot from which the Gopniks borrowed street criminal behavior, which was used by a part of rockers and metalheads, and they (some of them), respectively, unpretentiousness in the style of clothing and external unattractiveness to eliminate conflicts in appearance with courtyard gopniks. Formed from economic poverty, this cultural platform began to gain new ground since 1991. Among the Gopniks, criminal behavior and differentiation “own-stranger”, which was carried out in appearance, clothes and musical preferences, deepened. On this basis, the “Russian chanson” is gaining popularity among the Gopniks, which, in the eyes of rockers and metalheads, made them enemies. The corresponding hostility was most evident in the gop-stops of rockers and metalheads in the first place, through long hair, and then through music and clothing. Being in conflict with various countercultural movements, the Gopnik subculture, as rather destructive, degenerated in the late 2000s and early 2010s, whose representatives switched to counter-cultural movements that developed alongside the Gopnik subculture with which they actively fought in the Ukrainian SSR of Perestroika (to a lesser extent) and in the independent Ukraine at the end of the twentieth century.

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