

PERIODIZATION AND ANALYSIS OF ARTICLES DEVOTED TO ROCK MUSIC IN MAGAZINE *LIESMA*, REGARDING THEIR SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT (1958–1985)

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Summary

Keywords: Soviet ideology, authorities, attitude towards Western culture

The paper discusses the history of rock music in Latvia in the time of Soviet occupation. The aim of this research is to analyse the articles on rock music in the magazine *Liesma* and provide contextual information about the time period. Articles were researched in a socio-political context, as well as in the context of the Latvian rock music scene to understand the dynamics of the authorities' attitude towards rock music and the cultural politics of the USSR in Latvia. All periodicals in the USSR were strictly controlled by censorship and the state monopolized their publication. The magazine *Liesma* was the responsibility of the Leninist Young Communist League in Latvia and it was one of the few periodicals oriented towards Latvian youth.

The chronology of the research starts with the very first magazine (1958) and ends in the year when Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985). Four time periods are identified in the research:

1. Disregard of rock music (1958–1962),
2. Condemnation of rock music (1962–1970),
3. 'Domestication' of rock music (1970–1980),
4. 'Supervision' of rock music (1980–1985).

Rock music was disregarded in the press until 1962 and all foreign popular music was criticized. People were also listening to rock music on foreign radio stations, although broadcasts in Latvian cities were intentionally disrupted. Authorities tried to suppress all information about popular culture in the West.

1962–1970 was a period of condemnation of rock music. Though the first Latvian rock bands formed, foreign rock music was criticized in the press. It was considered a symbol of the depravity of the West, as capitalistic business and worthless popular music that was not suitable to the people of Soviet Union. Strong criticism was expressed about young people dancing to Western music. Latvian rock bands were ignored in magazines during this period.

The next period was the 'domestication' of rock music (1970–1980) – the time when political relationships between the USSR and Western

governments became more constructive but rock music became even more popular among Latvian youth. Some of the local rock bands that passed censorship and were believed to be harmless to the regime of the USSR were allowed to give official concerts and perform at festivals. There are articles devoted to those popular Latvian rock bands. Western hippies were particularly strongly criticised, as the hippie subculture in Latvia was becoming more popular. There were both condemnatory and appreciative articles devoted to rock music from the West, for example, articles about bands such as *The Beatles*, while some others such as the *Rolling Stones*, *T.Rex* or Elvis Presley mainly were criticized.

‘Supervision’ of rock music (1980–1985) was the most liberal of these periods. Some popular rock bands (both Western and Latvian) were often mentioned in the magazine, while some others were still ignored. During these years, many new ‘underground’ rock bands were established in Latvia. Their performances were limited to small audiences, and their concerts were organized in flats or small basements. However, in 1983, the Riga Rock Club began organizing legal rock concerts of little-known local rock bands that were ignored in press.

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