

The Hippie Movement in Soviet Lithuania. Aspects of Cultural and Political Opposition to the Soviet Regime

by
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I Introduction

The hippie movement in Soviet Lithuania (LSSR) remains an under-investigated subject. This new movement, which originated in the West (USA & United Kingdom) in the mid-1960s, reached Lithuania and the wider Soviet Union several years later, and quickly became one of the most prominent alternative youth movements of the Soviet period. In a country where young people were supposed to aspire to the values of the “new Soviet man” and in which expectations of total control and submission to the state were dominant, the hippie movement, with its alternative message, questioning established Soviet principles, values and symbols, becomes an especially relevant phenomenon for analysis.¹ In order to understand the political and social milieu in which this unofficial hippie culture appeared in Soviet Lithuania, one needs to understand the importance of power and ideology in the Soviet Union. The Khrushchev era (1953-1964) had created a lack of political control and enabled the development of a space in which new cultural forms and cultural movements could appear but, despite certain connections, the influ-

¹ Research on youth culture and youth movements in the Soviet Union has mainly concentrated on the case of Russia or looked at the Soviet Union as a whole, often ignoring the differences among other constituent republics of the USSR, see: Soviet Youth Culture, ed. by JIM RIORDAN, Bloomington 1989; HILARY PILKINGTON: Russia's Youth and its Culture, London – New York 1994; JULIANE FÜRST: The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy between Stalin and Khrushchev, in: The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era, ed. by POLLY JONES, London 2006, pp. 135-153. Nevertheless, there has been some research on the hippie movement in the other republics of the Soviet Union which has attempted to fill this gap. See WILLIAM JAY RISCH: Soviet ‘Flower Children’. Hippies and the Youth Counter-culture in 1970s L’viv, in: Journal of Contemporary History 40 (2005), 3, pp. 565-584; IRINA CHERNYAVKA: “Eto ne Masha, eto Misha”: 32 goda nazad v Grodno vzbuntovalis’ khippi [“This is not Masha, this is Misha”: Thirty-two years ago in Grodno hippies mutinied], in: Belorusskaya Gazeta 30 (2003), 397, <http://www.belgazeta.by/20030811.30/220162132> (last accessed 2.12.2011). An example of Lithuanian research is EGIDIJA RAMANAUSKAITĖ: Jaunimo kultūrinė rezistencija sovietmečiu: Hipių kultūrinės idėjos Lietuvoje [Cultural resistance of youth in the Soviet period: Traits of hippies’ subculture in Lithuania], in: Kau-no istorijos metraštis 4 (2003), pp. 127-163.

ence of the West was still very limited and the USSR remained ideologically and culturally isolated. Following Brezhnev's accession to power the opposition between the official and unofficial youth cultures grew even greater. On a previously unprecedented scale, young Soviet citizens felt an atmosphere of crisis, affectation and lack of sincerity in the system in which they lived. Like the rest of society also did, they created a "double-life", with an external façade and a hidden, internal life. Young people felt alienated by the system and lonely in a psychological and social sense. As the gap between expectations and reality grew, this abyss was partially filled with elements of Western culture and lifestyle, such as fashion and music.² Due to the fragmentary character of the information and fashions which reached the Soviet Union, the mixture of these elements in the youth cultures here created a very specific understanding of what constituted "the West".³ Through an analysis of the hippie movement in Soviet Lithuania and the place it held in Soviet society, this article intends to determine whether this movement was just a fashion, an example of social mimicry of Western patterns, or whether it was rather an example of resistance to the existing structures of the Soviet state? In other words, is it possible to claim that this movement, originating from Western opposition to middle-class values, was transformed in Soviet Lithuania into a cultural and political opposition to the Soviet regime?

Defining the chronological borders of this movement in Lithuania is complicated. The hippies of Moscow had a founding myth about the first hippies in Russia, claiming they came to Pushkin Square on June 1st, 1967 and declared, "This is us – the representatives of the new movement. This movement will be the system of real values."⁴ Lithuanian hippies did not have such a myth about their movement's origins. The first articles in the Soviet Lithuanian press to address the strange but interesting youth movement in the West

² In the literature on the USSR and Eastern Europe youth culture some authors talk about the processes of "Westernization" of the youth in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, exploring various forms of cultural production and consumption and interactions with ideology and politics, see GABRIEL BAR-HAIM: *Eastern European Youth Culture: The Westernization of a Social Movement*, in: *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2 (1988), 1, pp. 45-65; THOMAS CUSHMAN: *Notes from Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia*, New York 1996; HILARY PILKINGTON, ELENA OMEL'CHENKO, MOYA FLYNN, UL'ANA BLIUDINA, ELENA STARKOVA: *Looking West? Cultural Globalization and the Russian Youth*, University Park, PA 2002.

³ ALEXEI YURCHAK: *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton, NJ 2006, p. 159, introduces the concept of the "Imaginary West" alleging that the "West" in Soviet narratives was an archetypal manifestation of an imaginary "elsewhere" (which was not necessarily a real place). It was produced locally and existed only at the time when the real West could not be encountered.

⁴ TAT'YANA B. SHCHEPANSKAYA: *Simvolika molodezhnoi subkul'tury. Opyt etnograficheskogo issledovaniya sistemy, 1986-1989 gg.* [The symbolism of youth subculture. The experience of ethnographic research of the system, 1986-1989], Sankt-Peterburg 1993, p. 30. Also see IDEM: *Sistema. Teksty i traditsii subkul'tury* [System. Texts and traditions of subculture], Moskva 2004.

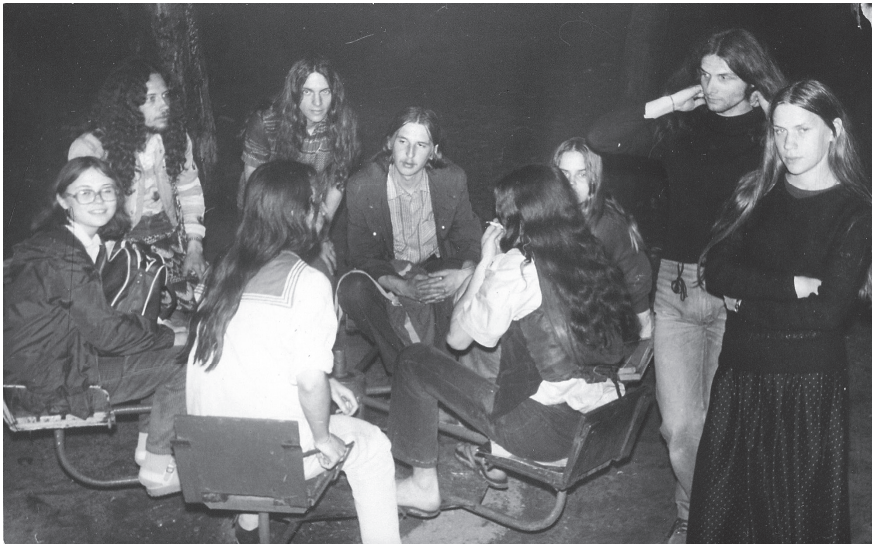


Fig. 1: Gathering of hippies, early 1980s. LSA, document collection K-18, inventory schedule 2, file 271, p. 5. All the pictures presented in this article are taken from a file of the Kaunas KGB, entitled "Pictures – Hippies, punks in their home environment, at the Hill of Crosses", dated June 6th, 1970 – summer of 1981. This file includes pictures mainly confiscated from members of the hippie movement or taken secretly by KGB officials

appeared in 1967⁵, but at this stage it was clear that nobody expected this hippie movement to reach the Soviet Union or Lithuania. The members of Lithuania's hippie movement interviewed for this research⁶ indicated that the movement began between 1967 and 1970 and ended in the early 1980s. The first records on this movement in the Lithuanian Special Archive (*Lietuvos Ypatingasis Archyvas*; LSA) date back to the beginning of the 1970s; there are no records after the beginning of the 1980s.

Before moving on to analyze the hippie movement in Lithuania, one first needs to clarify the term "movement". Charles Tilly defined a movement as a group of people, identified in accordance to their relationship to the same system of values.⁷ The social field, which is in a state of constant tension due to contradictions within society, creates cultural spheres of opposing stereotypes as a result of these contradictions, which are enforced by society and the system. Therefore, an alternative way of life is created. In some cases, the

⁵ IRENA VLADIMIROVIENĖ: Hipi [Hippies], in: *Mokslas ir gyvenimas* 11 (1967), pp. 29-32.

⁶ In 2000-2002, 18 semistructured biographical interviews with members of the Lithuanian hippie movement during the Soviet period (from the biggest Lithuanian cities – Vilnius and Kaunas) were recorded by the author of this article in preparation for her bachelor and – two years later – masters' thesis at the Faculty of History, Vilnius University. The age of the respondents ranged from 39 to 53 years.

⁷ CHARLES TILLY: *From Mobilization to Revolution*, New York 1978, p. 9.

interaction between power and opposition to it produces new socio-cultural forms, known as movements.⁸ Given this definition, the hippies in Soviet Lithuania can be considered to be a movement. The hippie movement's opposition to the system in Soviet Lithuania was conveyed through cultural forms (appearance, rock music, the use of drugs, etc.).

The theoretical base for this research comes from the works of the political anthropologists Jan Kubik⁹, James Scott¹⁰, and David I. Kertzer¹¹, as well as Tony Jefferson, Paul Willis and others at The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham¹², all of whom focus on problems of conflict between alternative cultures and cultural and political domains. Jan Kubik raises the question of how politics is implemented within culture, using symbolism as a mediator. According to him, official culture creates and legitimates norms and symbols, indicating how one or the other member of society should behave. Those who do not obey are considered to be outsiders in society and Kubik claims that one of the main features of the Soviet period was the polarization of public and private life, and even though Kubik's insights deal mainly with the case of Poland, where there existed a strong feeling of cultural identity among the population, similar peculiarities could also be found in Soviet Lithuania. Power transfused through all spheres of life and was a dimension of all social intercourse which could be highlighted through cultural forms.¹³ Thus, culture and power are related categories, and cultural opposition was inevitably entangled with political opposition. Therefore it is important to pay attention to the symbolic dimension of conflicts between elements of official power and counter-hegemonic ones. Those having real power consolidate and legitimate their status whereas the so-called "weak" confront official power through symbols.¹⁴ Symbols are multi-vocal and have a great power to unite people; through them processes of identification take place. Within the Lithuanian hippie movement, the use of multi-vocal symbols is obvious. Slang, long hair, and other elements of appearance and dress expressed resistance to sanctioned modes of behaviour and clothing. The authors of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies attribute the power of cultural revolt to the role of the hippie movement as a countercultural phenomenon. In their work they emphasise the structural dif-

⁸ JOHAN FORNÄS: *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity*, London 1995, p. 75.

⁹ JAN KUBIK: *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*, University Park, PA 1994.

¹⁰ JAMES SCOTT: *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven et al. 1985, introduces the term "everyday resistance".

¹¹ DAVID I. KERTZER: *Ritual, Politics and Power*, New Haven et al. 1988.

¹² *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, ed. by STUART HALL and TONY JEFFERSON, London 1976; PAUL WILLIS: *Common Culture. Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*, Boulder 1990.

¹³ KUBIK (as in footnote 9), p. 4.

¹⁴ KERTZER (as in footnote 11), p. 5.

ferences between hippies and previous Western youth movements, for example, attention to individuality and the elimination of boundaries between life and leisure.

The characteristics of the hippie counterculture included 1) mysticism and the creation of a utopian alternative culture through drugs and 2) more active political manifestations through community and protest action¹⁵. All the authors discussed above stress these aspects as constituting a stand against the official order, which could not be expressed openly but which could be seen in everyday activities, words and actions. Alternative cultural forms and the content they represent contradict officially implanted and maintained forms.

II Content and Form: The Main Features of the Lithuanian Hippie Movement

II.1 The Hippies' Worldview

Political, social and cultural conditions in Soviet Lithuania determined the specific features of the hippie movement. As in the West, it was born as a protest against the materiality, rationality, and mechanical existence of society. In Lithuania, as in other Soviet republics, this movement became a countercultural form of protest against Soviet power. It is relatively difficult to speak about specific features of the Lithuanian hippie movement as this was a transnational phenomenon, and hippies across the Soviet Union did not distinguish themselves by nationality. All hippies shared common ideas and ways of life. They exchanged information, music, and ideas among themselves. It must also be emphasized that the hippie movement was exclusively a phenomenon of youth in large cities, as information reached them faster and the contingent of youth here was more diverse.

The constant atmosphere of moral pressure and the balancing act on the dangerous edge of what was "allowed" and "not allowed" led members of the Lithuanian hippie movement to attempt to escape from active social life and to create their own way of life and a different worldview. All hippies were united by the same key principles of this worldview (as influenced by the West): freedom, love and unity, or freedom, love and spirituality. Hippies espoused a countercultural worldview in which the main emphasis was on presenting themselves in opposition to "normal" society.¹⁶ One of the main principles of the hippie worldview was freedom:

"The main principle of our worldview was freedom. Human freedom, personal freedom and all other principles were derived from this one. In the context of So-

¹⁵ JOHN CLARKE, STUART HALL, TONY JEFFERSON, BRIAN ROBERTS: *Subcultures, Cultures and Class. A Theoretical Overview*, in: *Resistance Through Rituals* (as in footnote 12), pp. 9-74, here p. 60.

¹⁶ ARTEMII TROITSKII: *Rok v Soyuze: 60-ye, 70-ye, 80-ye* [Rock in the Soviet Union: the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s], Moskva 1991, p. 26.

viet society, freedom was only an illusion. The situation was absolutely abnormal. We were expected to be like rats in the cage but we resisted against this.” (S. D.)

In a Soviet society in which uniform and authorized modes of behaviour dominated and where personal freedom was repressed, the principle of “freedom” gained special importance. Freedom was understood very broadly as the internal condition of human beings, and this freedom was attained through the experience of taking drugs, listening to rock music and communicating with companions. Most of the hippies in the Soviet Union idealized the Western system and society where, according to respondents, hippies were absolutely free, no one persecuted them, and they had democracy. This was contrasted with life behind the Iron Curtain. Freedom in the context of Soviet society meant not only freedom of self-expression but also freedom from surveillance and persecution. Therefore, the idea of freedom in the milieu of Lithuanian hippies was turned into that of a sacred goal to be strived towards. Hippies understood this way of life as free and unrestricted:

“A free person was one who did not work, did not study, and who was living just for himself. I knew one old hippie from St Petersburg. We often stayed in his place, he lived in abandoned houses. He always carried a little case full of screws and pipes. If the militia accused him, he showed the case, and acted as if he was a worker.” (R. S.)

Due to the lifestyle they chose, hippies were often accused of vagrancy by the Soviet authorities. As is evident from the quote above, hippies tried to avoid such accusations in very inventive ways.



Fig. 2: Hippie community, 1970s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 6

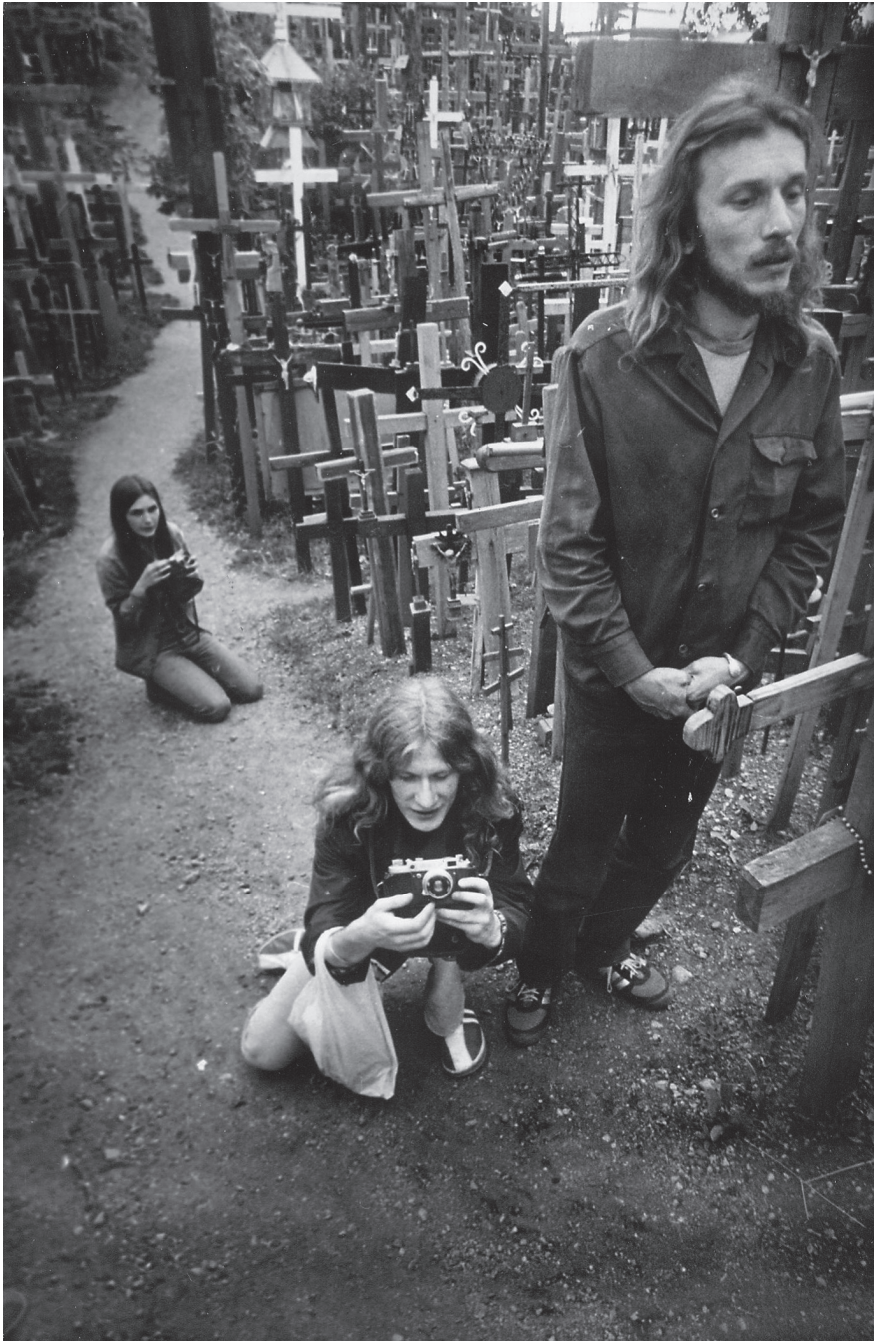


Fig. 3: Hippies at the Hill of Crosses (situated near Šiauliai) – site of Christian pilgrimage. On the back side of the picture is written “Vasia from Moscow in the Hill of Crosses”, early 1980s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 47

The other principle of their worldview – love – had a very wide meaning. It meant love for a woman, love for a man, love for companions, renunciation, pacifism. The idea of abstract love accumulated diverse meanings:

„The principle of love flourished. It was not understood as harlotry, it was a feeling, a mode of behaviour, ritual, based on the idea of unity.” (O. Z.)

Refusal to serve in the Soviet army was connected with the idea of pacifism. In order to receive a stamp in their military papers stating their ineligibility for military service, many young men voluntarily went into mental hospitals and, risking their health, often spent several months there.

A further significant aspect of the hippies' worldview was their religious-philosophical creed. Religion was chosen as a form of cultural opposition, and a few characteristics of the hippie movement must be highlighted here – trends derived both from Eastern religious-philosophical systems (Buddhism, Hinduism, Zen) and from the Christian tradition. At times these trends were interrelated. Eastern religion was perceived by hippies as a means of escaping reality and as offering validation for their way of life. Poverty, an outsider status, and social and political passiveness were all justified through allusions to these Eastern traditions. Various Eastern cults and meditative practices which were popular in the hippie movement later evolved into separate movements, and the Soviet authorities were particularly concerned by these cults. “Recently among certain youth groups, there has appeared an ideologically dangerous tendency to study Eastern philosophies, connected with the thinking of yogis and their way of life,” stated a KGB document on preventative work with youth.¹⁷

Some hippie groups also maintained Christian traditions, but there was no confrontation between these different religious orientations. In both cases, religion acted as a symbolic barrier, distinguishing the movement from the surrounding reality (which was officially non-religious and atheistic) and providing a means of escape from it. Religious creeds, often expressed in syncretic form (in which elements of different religious traditions were combined), were a part of a holistic hippie worldview which was conveyed through a wide variety of creative works, such as poetry and paintings. Paintings in which Jesus Christ was depicted as a hippie or as a hippie on a cross were quite common (a motif largely taken from “Jesus Christ Superstar”, the famous 1971 rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The main themes that were clearly expressed in Lithuanian hippie artwork were freedom and despair at a regime which restricted this freedom. Written works were circulated from hand to hand as *samizdat* literature. In essence, the hippie worldview was constructed in opposition to the values of the official Communist ideology, and it contradicted officially permissible norms of thought and behaviour. Therefore, even though Lithuanian hippies did not explicitly express political mo-

¹⁷ Report of the LSSR KGB, Vilnius City Department: On the preventative work with youth, 1981. LSA, doc. col. K-1, inv. sched. 14, f. 8, p. 8.



Fig. 4: A Hippie and his art work, late 1970s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 68

tives, the cultural forms which were adopted and created by this movement became an expression of opposition to the Soviet regime.

II.2 Appearance

Special attention should also be given to the meaning of the hippies' appearance, which clearly reflected the group's identity. Within the framework of counterculture, appearance plays a significant role – it is a unit of symbols, representing a perception of the world and a way of life. Victor Turner, in writing about this counterculture, noticed a similarity between hippies and Eastern saints – long hair, beards, and clothes that underline poverty.¹⁸ Long hair was one of the main and instantly visible expressions of hippie identity. In Lithuania, as in the West, it was a symbol of freedom and naturalness, a challenge to the conventional norms of society, and an identification with underprivileged groups of society.¹⁹ In the Soviet system, a long-haired young man (i.e. one with hair reaching the collar) was considered to be scruffy, refusing to obey societal norms, and destroying rules and order. Not only the Soviet authorities but also the rest of society expressed a fairly negative attitude towards hippies. Many articles appeared, especially in the youth-oriented

¹⁸ VICTOR TURNER: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca 1974, p. 244.

¹⁹ WILLIS (as in footnote 12), p. 97.



Fig. 5: Hippies, defined by the Soviet ideologists as “demonstrators of the Western youth fashion”, 1970s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 8

press, in which hippies were portrayed as “dirty” and “relics from the past”, “as if both sexes were mixed”.²⁰ It was very simple to attribute long hair as the main feature of being a hippie. Many young men would wear their hair long for reasons of fashion, but, according to the respondents, only true hippies knew the meaning of this sacred symbol:

“In the psychiatric hospital they told me – cut your hair and we will let you go. But I was free in my heart. Wearing long hair felt so natural. But while I was sleeping, they cut my hair. After that, they let me go.” (A. J.)

Protecting their long hair was not an easy task for hippies, as special groups of Komsomol members persecuted them in the streets, often shaving their heads. As one respondent noted, their generation could also have been called the “shaved generation”. For hippies, therefore, appearance was one of the external features which reflected their identity. The other was the specific hippie language, or slang.

II.3 Hippie Slang

Hippie slang was one of the most interesting and specific features of the Lithuanian hippie movement, and also the wider Soviet one. In the case of the

²⁰ ARVYDAS DAMBRAUSKAS: *Jaunimas ir moda* [Youth and Fashion], in: *Jaunimo gretos* 8 (1973), pp. 3-5, here p. 4.

Lithuanian movement, everyday speech was made up of a mixture of Lithuanian, Russian, and English words. To a casual observer, this mixture could appear as an absurd jumble of words, but this was precisely the point of this created slang. Hippies all around the Soviet Union used slang in order to disassociate themselves from the official discourse of power. Slang is not a language in the direct sense of the word, as it cannot express all meanings and embrace all themes. Rather, it is a way of coding and denoting information. It was able to express paradoxical effects because it could barely be understood by strangers. Slang acted as a symbolic barrier and served to distinguish hippies from the rest of society. Tat'yana Shchepanskaya, in writing about Russian hippies, distinguished five main themes of slang: terms of evaluation and definition; status-defining words; main symbols defining derivatives; words connected with the use of drugs; and toponyms and anthroponyms.²¹ In the case of Lithuanian hippie slang, these same themes were evident in their vocabulary. Lithuanian hippies paid special attention to toponyms and anthroponyms, as can be seen in the names given to their popular places of gathering, such as *Brodas* in Vilnius (this name for the main avenue of the city, called *Leninas* Avenue in the Soviet period and now known as *Gediminas* Avenue, derived from the Broadway in New York) or "Love Street" (*Laisvės* Alley in Kaunas). The most popular nicknames for hippies were *Valkata* (Bum/Vagabond), *Jėzus*, *Džyza* (Jesus, after Jesus Christ), and *Džimis* (Jimmy, after the famous rock musicians Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison).

II.4 Music

In the hippie milieu, rock music became a metaphor for freedom and love. According to Troitskii, the main idea of rock music is that of liberation, of rejection of norms and canons. Total captivity and total injustice – these were the ideas expressed in Soviet rock music.²² Rock music acted as a window to the world, a small taste of freedom:

"We read relatively little. We did it on purpose because we tried to find other means to feel unusual. Even very educated people consciously let music dominate. Music was the real thing. There were pieces like 'Hey, Joe', or Janis Joplin's 'Buy me a Mercedes Benz'." (O. Z.)

Listening to music collectively became a ritual. Radio broadcasts on stations such as Radio Free Europe, Radio Luxembourg or the Voice of America, still accessible despite Soviet attempts to control them, formed a thin thread connecting Eastern Europe and the West. Despite the wide range variety of propaganda methods they employed, Communist Party organizations experienced great difficulties in their agitational and educational work, largely because of the alternative channels of information reaching Soviet Lithuania (such as contacts with relatives living abroad, the aforementioned

²¹ SHCHEPANSKAYA (as in footnote 4), p. 73.

²² TROITSKII (as in footnote 16), p. 65.

Western radio stations and so on). For young people, these radio broadcasts provided an opportunity to receive the latest news about Western music and lifestyle.

Local rock musicians, many of whom were hippies, organized numerous “sessions” (concerts and gatherings, attended by hippies from across the Soviet Union). One of the biggest events took place in Vilnius on April 24th-26th, 1970. This gathering, at which 120 people participated, from Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga, Tallinn, Moscow and L’viv, became one of the most important events in Lithuanian rock music history and also for the hippie movement. It took place despite close surveillance by the KGB and concerted action by the militia. The “session” was initially supposed to take place in the Kirtimai Culture House in Vilnius, but participants were forcibly dispersed by the militia.²³ Finally, a few days later, on April 26th, the “session” was eventually held in the Žirmūnai restaurant in Vilnius, under the cover of a birthday party for one of the organisers. According to one of the participants:

“All the hipsters were there. At the beginning it was very quiet but later people began to storm. When the restaurant administrators noticed that the action was becoming anti-Soviet, they came onto the stage and said: ‘This is not a wild West for you’. Security, of course, knew everything.” (O. Z.)

Two trucks full of soldiers were waiting near the restaurant. Security agents tried to provoke a fight but on that evening everything went quite peacefully. Later those who had participated in the “session” were interrogated but, according to respondents, punitive measures were not applied. However after this event, state security agents became more vigilant.

As has been noted in this subchapter, music was a great factor in uniting members of the hippie movement. The rituals of listening to this music often also included the use of drugs, and this was yet another reason for the Soviet authorities to suppress the movement.

II.5 Use of Drugs

The use of drugs was customary among hippies, and it was deeply connected with other activities of their life. Drugs offered another way to escape from reality and to create a feeling of freedom, psychedelic experiences and a transcendental state. This is possibly why Western hippies are referred to as the “psychedelic generation”. Like their Western counterparts, Lithuanian hippies smoked marijuana and used hashish. “Grass” was considered to be less dangerous than alcohol. There was, according to respondents, a hippie saying that “alcohol pulls down, whereas grass lifts you up and transports you to the land of dreams”. Lithuanian hippies did not have the opportunity to use

²³ Secret information of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League (*Visasąjunginė Lenino Komunistinio Jaunimo Sąjunga*; VLKJS) about the “congress” of a certain group of young people (June 16th, 1970), LSA, doc. col. 4421, inv. sched. 25, f. 2, pp. 77-88.

LSD as hippies in the West did, since it was not available in the Soviet Union. The most popular drug they did use was a mixture of different kinds of pills (called *kaliosa*) and smoking *plan* (a drug brought from Central Asia). At the beginning of the hippie movement, hard drugs were not so popular; however, by the end, the use of opiates had become a major problem. Because of this, some hippies had developed connections with the criminal world, thereby presenting the Soviet authorities with the opportunity to identify hippies with drug addicts and to launch a suppressive campaign against the “moral decline” which they were seen to represent. In the parlance of the Soviet officials, they were called the *negativnaya sreda* (negative environment), “a dangerous expression of bourgeois irregularity”, and “an infection from the West”²⁴ etc.

II.6 Travel

Hitchhiking (*tranzavimas*) was a further inherent part of the hippie way of life and worldview. Hippies travelled all around the USSR, thus creating and maintaining connections between them across all its constituent republics. During these trips, the principle of brotherhood was very important:

“Whenever you came into another town, you could go to hipsters to eat and have a rest in their places. It did not matter if you were meeting this person for the first time.” (R. S.)

On the road, hippies recognized each other through the common symbols mentioned above, such as the wearing of pacifist symbols, their appearance, the use of the Victory sign etc. Hitchhiking was a seasonal phenomenon and mostly occurred during the summer. Hippies understood the road as an expression of spiritual life, a ritual leading to unknown realities. Their wanderings, however, were treated by the Soviet authorities as vagrancy (which was forbidden in the USSR and punishable by the law) and were connected with “uncontrolled behaviour” and a parasitical way of life.²⁵

As this description of the main features of the Lithuanian hippie movement shows, most of its elements were adopted from the West (basic worldview and principles, specific appearance, rock music, travels). Nevertheless, due to the fragmentary information about the movement on the other side of the Iron Curtain, and due to the specific context of Soviet society, the Soviet Lithuanian hippie movement also developed a number of local elements, such as its

²⁴ Such formulations can be found in most documents of the *Komsomol* and the KGB, and they were also evident in the press. See, for example, Special report of the KGB about the operational means for identifying “two ideologically harmful groups, calling themselves ‘hippies’” – LSA, doc. col. K-1, inv. sched. 14, f. 155 and 161.

²⁵ For more on this subject, see SHEILA FITZPATRICK: Social Parasites. How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism, in: *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 47 (2006), 1, pp. 377-408.



Fig. 6: The Victory sign was one of the signs for hippies to recognise each other, 1970s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 35

own slang. Although it appeared as a sporadic phenomenon, the Lithuanian hippie movement in time acquired certain organizational forms, establishing its own identity and structure.

III The Structure of the Hippie Movement in Lithuania and its Members' Self-perception

A certain hierarchical system existed in all hippie communities throughout the USSR. In Lithuania this was not as evident as it was, for example, in Russia, where one can distinguish three layers in the so-called "System"²⁶. According to the respondents, such a "System" did not exist in Lithuania, and the movement basically rested on individual leaders²⁷, although these leaders did maintain connections with their counterparts in Riga, Tallinn, and Leningrad. Leadership was not understood as a status to be pursued; it was dependent, rather, on character, personality or charisma:

"The leader was the one who had a special energy, attracting other people. I suppose it was a hierarchy based on intelligence." (A. L.)

²⁶ For more information see SHCHEPANSKAYA (as in footnote 4).

²⁷ In the document "Secret information of the Central Committee" (as in footnote 23) it is stated that: "Hippies are mainly young people – 18-22 years. Their leaders, as a rule, are connected with various music groups, and they are older. [...] The leaders are called 'bosses'." LSA, doc. col. 4421, inv. sched. 25, f. 2, pp. 83-84.

What was the role of these leaders? As in many similar movements, they were mediators who spread information and maintained relations within the group, and who played a very important consolidating role. Nationality, as many respondents²⁸ stressed, wasn't that important among the Lithuanian hippies. Equally, social stratification was insignificant. However, it should be noted that most members came from intelligentsia families, even though the hippies did not emphasize their social status themselves.

The division between "real" and "fake" hippies was an important one, even though drawing a line between these two categories is quite problematic. According to the respondents, a "real" hippie did not pretend to be one. To become a hippie, as most respondents stressed, was to choose a certain way of life, not to follow a fashion. Turner, writing on Western hippies, uses the term "liminal community".²⁹ According to him, hippies existed beyond the social structure. They could be defined as people having an indefinite social status, as those who had "fallen from society". In this sense they belonged to a liminal community. The distinction between "real" and "fake" hippies in the Lithuanian movement was mainly based on a judgement of whether one's chosen way of life was based on a refusal to participate in Soviet society, for example, on a refusal to pursue a career or higher education:

"If somebody wanted to achieve something in his life, he could not be with us for a long time. Maybe for some it was interesting to depart from their normal life for a short period but only for a very short period." (S. D.)

Moral attitudes could also be very important criteria in attempting to draw the line between those who chose the hippie way of life and those who were simply following a fashion:

"There were people who really were searching for true ideas, who had this protest against the regime inside them. They were real hippies. But many people were just imitating the hippie fashion. We recognized the real ones from their way of their thinking. There were only a few real hippies." (O. L.)

During the ten years of the hippie movement, there were several changes of generation. One further question requiring analysis is that of the relationship between these generations and the crucial changes in the hippie movement. Notably, at the beginning of the 1970s, when pressures on the youth were becoming more and more intense at the start of the so-called "empty period" in cultural life, many young people entered hippie communities. The general principles and the ideas of the hippie movement remained the same, but for many people it was only a fashion. Moreover, the extent of repressions against hippies increased. At that time, as the famous Lithuanian singer and

²⁸ Among the respondents there were people from different nationalities (Lithuanians, Russians, and Jews) and all of them stressed that nationality did not have any important role in accepting people into the group or defining their status.

²⁹ TURNER (as in footnote 18), p. 246.

song-writer Vytautas Kernagis has noted, to be a hippie was to be fashionable:

“Long hair obligated me to be better. It was entirely a wish to overcome the negative attitude of surrounding people. Later, *hipism* became a fashion, degenerated and became dirty. The hippie subsistence turned into daily routine for many people.”³⁰

As discussed above, members of the Lithuanian hippie movement were seen to be removed from the framework of Soviet society. Hippies sought to escape socialist reality, but the degree of dissociation differed. The lifestyle of some members expressed protest more openly, while the protest of others was less extravagant. Nevertheless, the authorities treated all hippies as posing a possible threat to the stability of Soviet power, ideology and the regime itself.

IV The Hippie Movement in the Light of Soviet Power and Ideology

Bearing in mind the importance of ideological homogeneity in holding Soviet society together, a special system of indoctrination was designed in order to control the youth. Here, a prominent role was played by the youth organizations. Their main task was to ensure the creation of “the new Soviet man”, whose personal characteristics were to be, for example, prioritisation of the public interest, a deliberate and responsible attitude to work and political activity, socialist patriotism, and a spirit of collectivism.³¹ Generally speaking, every person was meant to be, first and foremost a member of the collective; little space was given to individual initiative or responsibility. The idea of total subjection was maintained through educational and work institutions and through other formal groups. Alternative points of view were treated as ideologically dangerous:

“I was very often told by the Komsomols: ‘You hold us back because you do not build Communism. You must be annihilated. Do you know who the First Secretary of Lithuanian Communist Party is?’ Of course, I did not. So, they said: ‘See, you don’t know. You have red socks and a leather coat. Why do you not want to be like other Soviet people?’”(O. Z.)

Even though the hippies themselves did not want to be involved in politics, the Soviet authorities nevertheless regarded their activities as political activism:

“The movement was not politicised on purpose. We did not want politics. But the authorities saw us as enemies.”(O. L.)

Any confrontation with official culture and social norms was treated by the Soviet powers as resistance to its universal goals, and hippies were therefore

³⁰ Cited from DALIA RINKEVIČIŪTĖ: *Nostalgija: Neišmušusių valandų triumfas* [Nostalgia: Triumph of the unbroken hours], Vilnius 1991, pp. 13-14.

³¹ RONALD J. HILL, PETER FRANK: *The Soviet Communist Party*, Boston 1986, p. 77.



Fig. 7: Hippies in *Leninas* avenue in Vilnius, early 1980s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 51

placed under constant observation by the Soviet authorities. Alternative youth movements were politicised, and Komsomol acted as a defender of the conservative attitudes and interests of the youth. However, neither Komsomol activists nor Communist Party functionaries showed much interest in seeking to better understand these movements, rather holding a very superficial attitude towards them. The authorities simply divided all youth culture into two categories: 1) those who actively helped in building Communism and 2) the disobedient, politically unreliable, “antisocial” youth who were considered “victims of the West”, “dangerous proponents of the bourgeois culture and way of life.”³² Propaganda and agitation played an important role in shaping the official model of youth culture, and Komsomol paid special attention to the so-called “creative youth” – i.e. young writers, painters, and actors, who also comprised a significant part of the hippie movement. They were one of the main targets of surveillance.

The Soviet propaganda machine, despite a large number of active supporters and the wide range of instruments at its disposal, was still unable to stop influences flooding in from the West. As a result, more radical means were introduced in the fight with people who thought “different”. After 1970 hippies were placed under much closer surveillance by the KGB which subsequently led to further repression. According to the respondents, infiltrators

³² PILKINGTON (as in footnote 1), p. 44.

acting as hippies collected information and made reports to the KGB. All hippies picked up by the security services were forced into working for them:

“It was like that: they’d catch you and threaten to put you in jail, to kick you out of University unless you would help them – to write everything about other hippies. Once a week you would tell everything you had find out. Many people were broken and were involved in it.” (N. B.)

The fear that “promoters of Western culture” could spread ideas in society that were alien to those of the “Soviet man” was pointed out in many KGB and Komsomol reports on members of the hippie movement. Such young people were defined as “apolitical, lacking in principles, non-ideological”, “reading bourgeois literature, listening to anti-Soviet broadcasts of foreign radio stations, poorly raised and improperly educated by their families”.³³ Two key strategies of repression against this counterculture were: 1) moral/spiritual pressure (restrictions on the freedom of personal self-expression, creating fear, intimidation) and 2) the use of physical constraint (imprisonment, forced “treatment” in psychiatric hospitals).

“Persecuted, I had many problems with the KGB. They thought that my thinking was wrong, that I had lost my mind. After I was 17, very cruel persecutions began. I was constantly called to the KGB. There was a basement in Kalvarijai Street. They broke my arms, insisted that I tell information about my friends. After that, they began to offer me money, promised me a place at university. I categorically refused. They began to come to my house, terrorized me. They used force against kids who were 17-18 years old [...] frightened them, broke their arms and fingers. Girls were examined by a gynecologist and had to listen to humiliating comments.” (R.)

“The powers saw us as enemies. Investigations took place mainly in the basement, on the current Gediminas Avenue in Vilnius. Two friends of mine were there. When they came out, they could hardly move but no bruises could be found on their bodies.” (O. L.)

Initially, the security forces would try to negotiate with the persons under suspicion, offering them the opportunity to exchange information for a better job or education in a preferred high school. In cases where they refused to collaborate, the security forces then moved onto physical coercion, as we can see from the quotation above.

One especially dramatic strategy in the suppression of the hippie movement was the committing of young people to psychiatric hospitals. It has already been mentioned that, in some cases, hippies chose “treatment” in mental health hospitals, for example, in trying to avoid military service in the Soviet army. However, in most cases, this “treatment” was practiced by force.

³³ Report by the VLKJS about hooliganism actions of a certain group of young people (1969-1970), LSA, doc. col. K-1, inv. sched. 14, f. 9, p. 137; see also: Special report of the KGB (as in footnote 24), f. 155, p. 2.



Fig. 8: Portrait of a hippie, 1970s. LSA, doc. col. K-18, inv. sched. 2, f. 271, p. 33

“Mental curing” was commonly practiced in the Soviet Union throughout the 1970s and 1980s, repressing people with different ways of thinking.³⁴ According to Soviet propaganda, only the insane could be unsatisfied by living conditions in the USSR and protest against the existing order. Thus, by imposing the diagnosis of mental patient, control over society could be main-

³⁴ See ROBERT VAN VOREN: Political Abuse of Psychiatry – An Historical Overview, in: *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 36 (2010), 1, pp. 33-35; RICHARD J. BONNIE: Political Abuse of Psychiatry in the Soviet Union and China. Complexities and Controversies, in: *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law* 30 (2002), 1, pp. 136-144; JAMES O. FINCKENAUER: *Russian Youth. Law, Deviance and the Pursuit of Freedom*, New Jersey 1995, pp. 52-54.

tained. Many members of the Lithuanian hippie movement experienced a dread of psychiatric hospitals:

„For two months I was in a psychiatric hospital. They induced me into insulin comas. The insulin has a terrible after-effect. It dulls your brain, you become bloated, your eyes dull, and your head is so heavy. To wake you up from coma, they force you to drink very, very sweet tea, like syrup. [...] Using this method, they tried to change my thinking but they did not succeed. I began to pretend to be sane. Actually, I could not understand myself whether I was sane or not.” (R.)

Many young people were destroyed by medications and other methods of treatment used in psychiatry. At that time, mental disease was used to label people who did not correspond to the moral code of the “real Soviet man” and who resisted the official order. For compulsory mental treatment in psychiatric hospitals, parental agreement was needed for underaged youths. This represents another dramatic aspect of society’s response to hippies – some parents, in giving their consent to treatment, expressed their desire to get their child back into “normal society”. Imprisonment in psychiatric hospital was, in some cases, an alternative to imprisonment in jail. During big Soviet celebrations and festivals (especially May Day and the celebrations of the October Revolution), persons who were considered “dangerous to society” were isolated and placed temporarily into mental hospitals. The methods used against hippies highlight the logic of the Soviet regime: a person with a nonconformist way of life was considered dangerous to society and was in need of correction.

V Hippies in the Context of Anti-Soviet Youth Resistance

The combination of a generation growing up in a very constricted Soviet environment and their burgeoning desire for freedom matured into ideas of youth revolt. The year 1972 signified a crucial turn, not only in the hippie movement, but also in all of Lithuanian society. Demonstrative action was taken by youth in Kaunas on May 18th-19th, 1972, following the self-immolation of 19-year-old Romas Kalanta on May 14th, in Kaunas at the Musical Theatre garden. Even though, as most respondents alleged, Kalanta was not a member of the hippie movement, his death had a big impact on Lithuanian youth culture in general. As KGB records confirm, many hippies also participated in the demonstrations which took place during these May days of 1972, which were to constitute one of the largest explosions of alternative youth culture in the entire Soviet Union. The Soviet powers unsuccessfully tried to hide this tragic event from the eyes of wider society. On May 16th, 1972, a special Plenum of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) Kaunas City Executive Committee (*Lietuvos Komunistų partijos Kauno miesto vykdomasis komitetas*) was convened and its participants were informed about “the per-

sonality of Romas Kalanta and the circumstances of his suicide³⁵; an evaluation of this event³⁶ was also presented and instructions were given for leaders of LCP organizations in schools and workers' collectives. At the same plenum, the threat that hippies could take advantage of the death of Kalanta was conveyed. KGB reports documented many cases of the contravention of social order by hippies; many young men were arrested after the demonstrations and put in jail. About 7 000 people took part in the mass repressions against the youth demonstrations, including Soviet army and militia forces as well as activists of other Communist Party organizations.³⁷

The death of Romas Kalanta shocked not only the structures of the LCP and the security forces, but also the whole of Lithuanian society. The Kaunas events also marked a turning point in attitudes towards youth culture. Before 1972, Soviet officials perceived the phenomenon of alternative youth culture rather superficially; after the event, however, they started to analyse the hippie movement more closely, and to search for more effective means to suppress it.

The *kalantines* revolt – a term which has become used to describe the protests of young people in Kaunas in 1972 and the fierce repressions which followed – strengthened already-existing feelings of despair and had an impact on the historical consciousness of the “1972 generation”.³⁸ Nevertheless, opposition to the Soviet regime was not over. More nuanced forms of passive resistance were developed, such as the distribution of proclamations with nationalistic content, poems devoted to the idea of a free Lithuania and to Kalanta, and youth letters to the LCP organizations. One of the most eloquent examples is a letter titled “Why is contemporary youth demanding freedom?” written by an anonymous young person to the LCP Kaunas Department of Agitation and Propaganda:

³⁵ The evaluation of Kalanta's self-immolation was also one more proof of the conformist activity of some of the Soviet psychiatrists. Trying to suppress this event, an authoritative council of the most prominent psychiatrists of that time came to the conclusion that “Kalanta committed suicide not because of political motives but because of his morbid mental condition (a chronic mental illness schizophrenia was diagnosed). Nobody threatened him, behaved cruelly, nobody obliged him commit suicide. He had all the conditions to live, work, was fully materially sustained.” Material of the criminal case on R. Kalanta's death fact (September 25th, 1974), LSA, doc. col. K-1, inv. sched. 43, f. 189, p. 178. This KGB report also reflected attitudes of Soviet authorities towards the youth – how can a “fully sustained” young man kill himself? Hence the conclusion was made that only a mentally ill person could be unsatisfied with living conditions in the socialist system.

³⁶ Protocol of the special Plenum of the LCP Kaunas City Executive Committee (May 16th, 1972), LSA, doc. col. 1771, inv. sched. 61, f. 61, p. 23.

³⁷ KASTYTIS ANTANAITIS: *Kalantinės ir jų aidai* [Kalantines and their echoes], in: *Romo Kalantos auka*, Vilnius 2002, pp. 21-68, here p. 52.

³⁸ The generation of 1972 is understood as the cohort generation, united by the vivid historical-symbolic event, see: EGIDIJUS ALEKSANDRAVIČIUS: *Laisvės šauksmas: 1972-iejai* [The Call of Freedom: 1972], *ibidem*, pp. 7-19.

“Everybody knows how people live abroad. Young people are demanding exactly this kind of life. The events of May showed it. All Lithuanian youth is against Russian power. They want to be free. [...] Youth is very restricted now in all senses. Here are some proofs of it – first of all, appearance. Why it is not allowed for young men to grow their hair long? How can hair cause damage to the government? The same could be said about clothes. Why can we not dress like we want to? Maybe you think that young people who, according to you, are improperly dressed or have long hair are necessarily opposed to Soviet rule. You are wrong. You can order us to cut our hair and to dress “normally”, but you cannot order us to deny the aspiration of freedom. Young people do not feel free (you know that very well but you are afraid to contradict it). Why are people from the Soviet Union not allowed to go abroad? You know that nobody will come back to this Soviet beggary.”³⁹

This audacious letter, written in a school-student’s handwriting, is a remarkable revelation of the mood of youth living in the Soviet system. It is important to mention that it were not only members of the hippie movement, but also many other young people who were unsatisfied with the living conditions, restricted opportunities and moral atmosphere in the Soviet state. The persecution of young people and the repressions marked a tragic moment that determined the specifics of youth culture in Soviet Lithuania. Socio-cultural and political opposition to the Soviet system, as an expression of persisting conflict between the state/ideology and society/individual, exploded into counter-hegemonic discourses. The notion of culture was closely interrelated with the notion of power, which explains why the hippie movement was perceived as a form of resistance to the structures of the official social and political order.

VI Conclusions

While many features were taken and adapted from the Western pattern of the hippie movement (rock music, appearance, basic worldview and principles), the local hippie movement also developed its own specific forms and features, due to the particular socio-cultural and political conditions in Soviet Lithuania. It would be incorrect, therefore, to characterise this movement as a simple example of “social mimicry” or as a fashion copied from the West. Due to the fragmentary character of information reaching Lithuania and to the context of Soviet society, the hippie movement in Soviet Lithuania acquired unique local elements. The essential difference between the Lithuanian (and wider Soviet) hippie movement and that in the West is that the Western movement represented a protest against materialism, mechanical existence and middle-class values. Within the socio-cultural context of Soviet Lithuania, the hippie movement expressed a protest against the Soviet regime through specific cultural forms – unconventional appearance, rock music, the use of drugs. These cultural forms had an important function of symbolic dis-

³⁹ Criminal case nr 343, LSA, doc. col. K-1, inv. sched. 43, f. 189, p. 138.

sociation. Members of the hippie movement balanced on the edge of the actually-existing and their assumed ideal reality.

The hippie worldview and way of life were essentially contrary to the values of the “new Soviet man” promoted by the regime, and members of the hippie movement therefore fell out of the framework of the Soviet society. The degree of dissociation differed – some members of the hippie movement chose complete withdrawal and expressed strong opposition to turning themselves into a nameless collective object of Soviet society, whereas other hippies were more balanced between the movement and society, and were less committed to hippie ideas.

The Soviet authorities perceived the hippie movement as posing a challenge to the officially embedded order – not only to the model of official youth culture, as represented and maintained by the ideologically-motivated Komsomol organization, but also to the stability of the entire Soviet regime.

The relationship between the hippie movement and the Soviet authorities constitutes a very complicated and painful topic. The Soviet authorities treated hippies as blind promoters of Western culture, and as an infection from the West which threatened to disintegrate Soviet values of youth and which even endangered the whole of society. As a result, the hippie movement was elevated into a political movement. Its Members were placed under constant moral and physical pressure. The most significant role in this fight against the admirers of the Western culture was played by the twin structures of Komsomol and the KGB. Special Komsomol brigades performed numerous actions against hippies; educational institutions organized special “trials”; the KGB persecuted and registered members of the hippie movement (although due to a lack of more detailed information in the archives, exact numbers cannot be indicated); and extensive dossiers on them were maintained. Hippies were also often committed to mental hospitals.

The symbolic dissociation from the Soviet reality which was stressed by the hippie movement allows us to speak of a symbolic resistance to the regime expressed through forms of cultural opposition – an alternative way of life and the basic symbols of the hippie movement. Since culture and political aspects of power were closely interrelated, any opposition was treated in political terms. The means of opposition varied from cultural forms (“asserting oneself”) to quite clearly expressed political manifestations, such as the events in Kaunas, where hippies, like many other young people, took part in open declarations and demonstrations of their aspirations for freedom (understood not only as the highest aspiration – freedom for the country they lived in, but also as young people’s desire to claim their own personal freedoms – the freedom of self-expression and freedom of speech). In this way, the Lithuanian hippie movement inevitably developed from a predominantly cultural form of opposition to the Soviet regime into a political one, which, to a great extent, was expressed through symbolic forms and actions.

Zusammenfassung

Die Hippie-Bewegung im sowjetischen Litauen. Einige Aspekte der kulturellen und politischen Opposition gegen das sowjetische Regime

Dieser Artikel behandelt die Hippiebewegung in Litauen unter sowjetischer Herrschaft. Entstanden in der Mitte der 1960er Jahre im Westen (in den USA und in Großbritannien), erreichte diese neue alternative Jugendbewegung einige Jahre später die Sowjetunion und das dazugehörige Litauen.

Der vorliegende Artikel will die folgenden Fragen beantworten: Welche Form und welchen Inhalt hatte die Bewegung in Litauen? Handelte es sich lediglich um eine Mode, einen Trend, ein Beispiel für soziale Mimikry, mit der westliche Verhaltensmuster imitiert wurden? Oder war es ein Beispiel für Widerstand gegen das sowjetische Regime? Ist zu konstatieren, dass sich diese Bewegung, die im Westen aus Opposition gegen die Mittelschicht entstanden war, im sowjetischen Litauen in eine kulturelle und somit auch politische Opposition gegen die sowjetischen Strukturen umwandelte?

Die Hauptmerkmale der litauischen Hippiebewegung, wie Weltanschauung, Slang, Mode, Musik, Drogenmissbrauch, Reisegewohnheiten, aber auch die Struktur der Hippie-Gemeinschaften, das Verhältnis zwischen Hippie-Bewegung und Ideologie werden in dem Beitrag diskutiert. Der zuletzt genannte Aspekt ist von besonderer Bedeutung. Einerseits wurde der Hippie-Bewegung seitens des Regimes ein politischer Status verliehen, da die Weltanschauung der Hippies und deren besonderer Lebensstil in völligem Kontrast zu den Werten des „neuen sowjetischen Menschen“ standen, wie er von den sowjetischen Ideologen propagiert wurde. Die Angehörigen der Bewegung standen unter moralischem und physischem Druck. Angesichts der symbolischen Loslösung von der sowjetischen Realität, die von den Hippies betrieben wurde, lässt sich andererseits von einem symbolischen Widerstand gegen das Regime sprechen, der in Formen kultureller Opposition – dem alternativen Lebensstil und den wichtigsten Symbolen der Hippie-Bewegung – seinen Ausdruck fand. Da kulturelle und politische Aspekte von Macht in der sowjetischen Herrschaftsperiode eng miteinander verbunden waren, wurde jegliche Opposition mit politischen Mitteln bekämpft. Folglich entwickelte sich die litauische Hippie-Bewegung unweigerlich zu einer kulturellen und auch politischen Opposition gegen das sowjetische Regime.