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# Socialist Flower Power: Soviet Hippie Culture

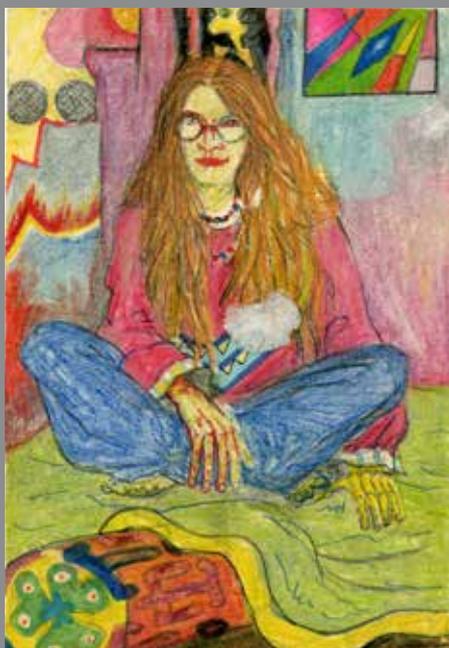
May 20 to  
August 26, 2018

## Хиппи (Khippi)



The hippie movement was the first truly global youth movement, yet when it began the hippies of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York couldn't have known how far their style and creed would spread. Indeed, when the San Francisco Diggers staged a funeral for the hippie movement in 1969, hippies across the world were only just getting into the swing of things. In Moscow, the summer of 1969 was seminal for the band of *khippi* that had started to assemble at a few central public places and in the apartments and country houses of their mostly privileged parents. It was then that Moscow hippies discovered that there were many of them and that they shared more than a desire for long hair and a taste for rock-and-roll and jeans. These young people embraced love and peace and rejected the socialist ideology of their parents, just as their Western peers felt alienated by their parents' bourgeois outlook and their country's capitalism.

Hippies had started to appear, independent of each other, in all the major Soviet towns. Youngsters painted flowers on their cheeks in Riga, invented



hippie symbols in Sevastopol, assembled on the main square of Magadan, in a cemetery in Lviv, opposite the Communist Party headquarters in Kaunas, and by the Finland Station in Leningrad. They idolized the flower children of Haight-Ashbury, yet their main source of information about them came from the Soviet press. Soviet media initially paid a great deal of attention to the new anti-capitalist, collectivist-minded phenomenon, covering it with sympathetic, almost wistful articles such as one in the newspaper *Around the World* called "Travels to the Hippieland," which was read by thousands of budding



Their existence was a constant act of deviation. They rejected and made fun of Socialist norms. They worshipped Western music. They refused to work at proper jobs and declared themselves insane to avoid being conscripted into the army. They were Soviet youngsters, and they needed to make do with what the Soviet Union provided them. They hung out under statues of Lenin, Pushkin, and Mayakovsky. They sourced their marijuana from Central Asia rather than India. They mixed Soviet pharmaceuticals to imitate the effects of LSD. They traveled to Bukhara and Samarkand and camped in the woodlands on the Baltic coast. They meditated on the glaciers of the Altai, ran naked into the Black Sea, and made their electric guitars by stealing the loudspeakers from public



telephones. In short, they became masters of survival in a system that was hostile to them, and the Soviet hippie movement, strong in numbers, outlasted that of their Western peers by several decades, until the very end of the Soviet Union and beyond.

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*The main thing was the non-acceptance of Soviet life—[sovka], which could be expressed in different ways. If you dress differently, it means you are one of ours. If you curse Soviet power, you are one of ours. If you smoke dope, you are one of us. If you search for God, you are one of us. If you try to think independently, in your own way, then you are one of us even more. (Anonymous, Irkutsk)*

*Cool clothes embroidered with hallucinatory plants and insects. Surrealist frescos and collages in underground apartments. Fragments of film without beginning or end... Psychedelic paintings in notebooks and exhibitions. Peace signs painted in doorways, telephone boxes, and lifts. All kinds of jewelry, amulets, and talismans. Anonymous flyers passed from hand to hand. Legends and tales, disseminated orally... The wonderful slang of the urban underground. The tireless hitchhiking from Moscow to Peter via Tashkent... Long meditations high in the mountains and in deserted metro stations. (Guru, Moscow)*

## Система (*Sistema*)



Moscow hippies were always the most numerous and the most influential among Soviet hippies, not least because they invented the curious term *Sistema* (system). The

word “system” was already used colloquially as a term for the Soviet authorities, yet it was also completely logical. Hippies did not want to be an alternative to existing power structures. They wanted to change society and the world. Hence, they wanted to be nothing less than the all-powerful Soviet system. The alleged founder of the Moscow *Sistema* of hippies was a young man from a military family named Iura Burakov, who was much better known by his nickname, Solntse (Sun). And indeed, like planets circling the sun, the capital’s hippies gravitated toward Solntse, who became a center of activity in those early years. His widespread network of friends and acquaintances was known as the Solar System or, more often, the Central System. It was the beginning of a term that outlived its inventor and most of the people who were its founding members.

In the late 1960s, Moscow hippies became aware of the fact that, while they were far from California, there were fellow hippies who lived closer to home, and some of them in places that felt more Western than the Soviet capital. The *Sistema* was extended to include these newfound peers and their networks. A lively exchange began to take place between Moscow and the cities of the Baltic states, especially Tallinn, which featured most prominently. The warmth of the Crimea also drew hippies south, while the lure of the exotic made them turn east to the Altai Mountains and the Central Asian republics. Soon the hallmark of the *Sistema* became the fact that no matter where a Soviet hippie traveled in the Soviet Union, he was likely to have, scribbled in a little booklet, a local telephone number for someone he had met at other hippie gatherings. These people would secure a bed, food, and some entertainment in exchange for the same kind of hospitality when they found themselves in other places. Word about



hippie happenings traveled along the *Sistema* grapevine, reaching people in far-flung places. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of hippies communed at the annual hippie camps, attended hippie weddings, and assembled to hear popular bands play in secret locations. The *Sistema* was an information center, a mutual aid network, a library of hard-to-find books, and a provider of entertainment, counseling, tailoring, and legal advice. The *Sistema* never really died, but with the death of the Soviet Union, the Soviet hippie system also lost much of its function. It was no longer needed to provide a parallel world to the Soviet system—a task it had efficiently and superbly fulfilled for many years.

## I. MOSCOW 1971



On June 1, 1971, under the leadership of Iura Burakov, a.k.a. Solntse, Moscow hippies planned an anti-Vietnam demonstration that would start from their regular meeting spot, the courtyard in front of Moscow State University (better known as the Psychodrom), and end at the American embassy. Inspired by the antiwar demonstrations that took place that year in the United States and around the world, Solntse applied for and believed that he had obtained official permission from Moscow authorities (the Soviet Union was officially opposed to the Vietnam War). He had been

duped. The authorities used the demonstration to let Moscow hippies assemble in one place and then arrested everybody present. The number of people carried off in Ikarus buses to a nearby police station was rumored to be over six hundred. In Iura Burakov's private archive, there is a short story written in the third person, in which he describes his preparations for the demonstration and his high hopes for what it would do. After 1971 Soviet hippies no longer tried to engage with authorities in political protests and stopped participating in political debates.

*It was his idea and it wasn't a bad one — to organize a protest against the Vietnam War at the American embassy on Children's Day. The guys supported him. But not a*

lot of them. And it had to be everyone. He had to work hard to convince people who weren't sure, who were hesitating. And he did it. Everyone was ready, they knew how to get there, where to go and what to bring. Everything went really well. They just had to check everything. To make it work like a good, well-oiled mechanism, so there weren't any rough edges, problems or breakdowns. Because [if it didn't work] there might be irreparable consequences. But why should he make an agreement with the authorities! It was really hard on his nerves and his health. He put everything he had into it, so it would be better, impressive and, the main thing, legal. The authorities went back and forth for a long time and then, no one expected it, but they agreed. This worried him a bit because they kept saying no and then, all of a sudden, they agreed. Of course, it was great that they agreed but some sixth sense told him that something wasn't right. Something was wrong there. On the other hand, everything was going really well. "We were finally going to show that we were absolutely not hooligans, getting drunk all the time. We were going to show them that we were normal, like everyone else, that we were also interested in the life of the country, the whole world. Maybe this is putting it too strongly. But in any case, we didn't want to stand on the sidelines and look at what was going on as bystanders. Well, now everyone will know that long-haired hippies can do something worthy of human beings too!" (Iura Burakov, Short Story Solntse)

## 2. KAUNAS 1972

On May 15, 1972, a young man named Kalantas, who lived in Kaunas, set himself on fire and died crying out, "Freedom for Lithuania." While he was not really part of the small band of Kaunas hippies, he wore his hair long and chose the favorite meeting spot of the city's hippies as the site of his immolation. Shortly after, officials arrested all known hippies, and events began to unfold from there. When the KGB ordered that Kalantas's funeral be moved ahead by two hours to avoid demonstrations, the town's young people took to the streets in unprecedented numbers. These gatherings turned into riots that lasted several days. During the riots, demands for a free Lithuania filled the air, along with slogans demanding freedom for hippies and access to rock music. For several days the Soviet authorities lost



control of Kaunas until tanks crushed the youth uprising several days later.

*We happened to be in Kaunas in the very middle of the storm. People were having fun, there was music, people were partying, there were barricades... It was one big party. Grandfathers, nationalists, everyone was there... whole villages, grandfathers, sons, grandsons – the kind of really strong guys. Whole villages arrived. In we are somehow there too ... Music, people playing guitars, lots of guns – it was all in the open. There were lots of long-haired youngsters, mostly Lithuanians, mostly from the Baltic states. There was someone from Belorussia... A lot of Russians were there. There was a really intense rush, a surge. And then the military divisions came storming in. I heard a whizzing, popping sound ... bullets ... ricocheting. It was interesting to be right in the middle. And they gave me an automatic rifle to hold. I fired it a few times (Anonymous, Moscow)*

### 3. MOSCOW 1975

After the brutal dispersal of an open-air exhibition of not officially recognized artists in 1974 and a subsequent Western media outcry, the Moscow city government decided to allow two exhibitions by non-conformists in the grounds of the All-Union Fairground. The second of these took place in September 1975 in the House of Culture and involved a hippie art collective named Volosy – Hair. Under the leadership of Sveta Barabash alias Ofelia a handful of hippie artists provided paintings and edgings. Ofelia herself tailored a large hippie flag in red silk, which sported several hippie slogans in English and Russian. Just as the exhibition was to open, the flag (along with a few other artefacts) was confiscated by the authorities because of its inscription ‘Country Without Borders’. The artists refused to open the exhibition until all items were returned. Ofelia tailored a new flag overnight with an inscription that now read ‘World Without Borders’. The scandalous flag, its colourful creators and the tension surrounding both attracted the attention of the Western press, including Alfred Friendly from Newsweek. After the Newsweek interview Ofelia and her group were advised to quit Moscow for a while. They spent the winter in the Crimea, returning only in the spring of 1976. They never exhibited as an art collective again. Friendly’s articles places the flag back at Ofelia’s apartment after the exhibition, but then its trace disappears. Ofelia herself died in 1993 from a drug overdose. Despite much searching the whereabouts of the flag – if it still exists – remains unknown.

And we started to think, what shall we do? They said to us you have three weeks or maybe a month. We met regularly at Ofelia's apartment and then at Digtariuk's. And in various other apartments and we thought about doing what one would know call a performance. And then somebody suggested – I cannot remember who – that we should do a wall hanging – a hippie flag.

...

On the first flag we worked for a very long time. The ideas were generally proposed by me, Ofelia, Laime, Degtariuk. And this is how the idea came to life, we tailored the flag, Liuba Shmel – they were Sveta's disciples, they cut it out and we assembled it. For example, they decided to make the flag with different patches. They spent hours, made these clocks, non-attached arrows, and it was supposed to read: "World without time and county without borders." But in the second version was only: "World without borders." But this one they did fast, in one night. In general the first flag was worked on and worked on. They met with various frequency, it was all done in these different apartments. In general, Liuba was sewing, Ofelia was sewing, Ira Jagger, Chicago helped, all helped somehow, some with ideas, some with words and it turned out very pretty, this flag with two wimples, here was a fringe, and bells, and a guitar was painted on it, with these kind of strings.

...

Then all was done. They registered us as participants. We all got these entry passes. We went to the organizing committee and they called us: hippies: the Hair group. It came the preliminary work on the exhibition. We hung up the flag. Then what happened: the opening of the exhibition, we went there and there was a huge number of people, this was at the VDNKh, in the House of Culture. They said: the exhibition has not opened. Ordinary people were not admitted, there was a huge line of people. We go to the organizational committee and there all the artists had assembled. And the government representatives – they were called the committee of culture of the Moscow government, or somehow. And there, of course, were also people from the security organs. They had come at night and taken a large part of the works. And the artists demanded: "We will not open the exhibition until the regime will return our works." And all of this was said with raised voices, a crazy anti-Soviet hysteria ensued. Somebody had decided that this was all a stupid venture, and that this had to be nipped in the bud, and then somebody confiscated the works and gave rise to all kinds of anti-Soviet elements. This is the Soviet stupidity. In the end, some kind of compromise commission was established with regime representatives and those

representing the artists. There were also conformists among the artists. And then the regime decreed that some of the works they will simply not allow to be exhibited. The most anti-Soviet ones – the works of Rabin, Kablinskii. Among the group of most undesired works was also our flag. We were very surprised. The flag was categorically lost... They said: "Ok, these works we will return and these definitely not. And our flag was among those that were the most forbidden. And then a group of artists said: "We will not open the exhibition until all the works are returned. And others said: "Come on, why are you fuzzing, they are just hippies..." This was the situation within the non-conformist community. There was quite a conflict among the artists about this question. Some said – as long as this flat and other works are not returned, it is either all or nothing. And the others – come on, for what, most importantly our work. And time passed and already... Then somebody comes to us and says: "Come on guys, tomorrow we will open the exhibition and you will try to redo the flag, we will give you money for this." And these artist-avant-gardists gave us a, for the time not unremarkable, sum of money, this was quite big money, a thousand roubles or so. All contributed. For us this was simply a fantastic sum, because nobody among us was employed. They told us: "You have to buy everything and make it all within the next two or three days." And interesting is this: there, where our flag was supposed to hang, they affixed a piece of paper: "Our work was confiscated by the regime." And all sat in

their colourful hippie clothes underneath. Like a living exhibition all wore hair and arm bands, all were in hand-tailored gear, all very cool. Many people were fans of the hippie clothing of Sveta and Sasha. We sat below and said: "We sit here while the regime does not return our real work." They came to us: "Why the hell do you sit here. Get up, but quick." It was clear that these were agents – "There will be repercussions." And the second flag we did in an incredible time ... We all met in Degtariuk's apartment, if I am not mistaken. We took masses of drugs with us. Grass and other things. It all fired up our work. It was the same people working again as did before. ... And we made this



flag. I did not have long hair at that moment in time. And we decided that I should go from Degtariuk's flat, they wrapped me in this flag, I am dressed like some kind, not exactly invalid, but...well, they dressed me... they gave me this idiotic glasses to wear. And they gave me a beret, a jacket and some kind of shopping bags. And the flag was wrapped around me. They wrapped it around me. I had a pass. They, the leaders of the non-conformists, told us: "You have to bring it in, and hang it, we will call all the Western correspondents, journalists and so on." In principle these pictures have to be somewhere in the Western archives about Soviet exhibitions. If you find these archives. Because they photographed everything there was to photograph. And not only in black and white. It was not only the KGB who took pictures, it was also others. And I remember. I had a pass. I go and there is this long line. All were admitted only in groups. There were such lines. From the House of Culture to I do not know to where. They were longer than in front of the mausoleum in Soviet times. Everybody came. People had heard of it. And nobody had announced anything officially, all went via The Voice of America and other Western radio station. And Lorik, a dissident, called Kiblitiskii, a dissident artist: "Let's quickly hang this flag." They unwrapped me and I took off all this masquerade, put on my own clothes. We hung the flag, and immediately the Western correspondents assembled, photographed everything, this hippie flag, and within fifteen minutes the exhibition was closed down. They said that pipes had burst. After this exhibition the people in this Hair group indeed looked around and said: "It is dangerous that we have ventured into politics. What the hell, hippies are outside politics." There are different opinions on this subject. We came in the late seventies to the conclusion that here hippiedom had acquired a clearly political lacquer. We all took drugs consciously. Unfortunately, these were two inseparable things: hippies and drugs in that time. (Konstantin Oskin – Mango, Moscow)

#### 4. LENINGRAD 1978

Early in 1978 a curious announcement appeared in the newspaper *Leningradskaiia Pravda*. A free concert featuring a mix of famous Western and Soviet bands was going to play on July 4 in Leningrad's Palace Square, just outside the Hermitage. This most revolutionary of all revolutionary places would host the Beach Boys, Santana, and Joan Baez along with Soviet stars Alla Pugacheva and Veselye Rebiata. Big Western bands had never played in the Soviet Union, and, unsurprisingly, news of the concert spread rapidly. On the day, thousands of people gathered for this historic show without knowing that Soviet officials had long canceled the concert. The crowd refused to disperse. There were clashes on the adjacent Nevsky



Prospect, and street battles raged for hours.

*And someone said, "Well this just can't happen, because it could never happen. They won't come. Pugacheva – hardly. And Santana and Joan Baez – no. And the Mamas & the Papas, complete non-sense, they aren't coming." Look, they're maybe on the ferry but somewhere in the newspaper Komsomol'skaia Pravda there's already a note saying this won't happen. "Ah,*

*to hell with this!" the prols from the suburb were saying, "they're trying to confuse us, so they don't have to show us anything." Whatever. Not this important. Well, right*

*when I got there, people had started to move ... and the first clashes with the cops began. The cops were trying to grab people by the hand, someone squeezed one's hand and disappeared into the crowd, nobody wanted to fall into their clutches. There weren't just hippie habits – that moment when you slip out of a crowd and then show up somewhere nearby, on the right or the left, hippies weren't the only ones who knew how to do this, the proletariat, who had just come out after their working day, with bottles of beer, to relax, they knew how to do this too. Naturally, we fell for this provocation, walked along Nevsky Prospect and rattled the Pravda building a bit. ... And there, somewhere closer to the Anichkov bridge, people weren't quite yet losing their heads, but they understood what was going on and whoever was in front went to the back because they sensed that they were grazing us. That is, from one side and then from the other, jeeps were slowly coming onto Nevsky Prospect and cutting people off that way. They cut off the tail end of this demonstration line. They cut those people off and tried to pack them in. .... They cut off cars, first by the police and behind them, their servants. Only they looked different. Not wearing uniforms, in civilian clothes. Naturally when they were cut off people wanted to move forward, they immediately got clubbed on the head. ... one immediately jumps out from some kind of a cranny, one out of a car, they tried to break people's hands, sat them down [in the cars] and drove away with the first group. They drop off a passenger car in its place, they don't release people. The people are being trampled and they have to go somewhere but they won't let them. And it seemed to me that this had been set up very carefully: while everyone was standing on the square, everyone who was there was being photographed. (Aleksandr Rappaport, Leningrad)*

## Менты (Menty)



The Soviet state was ever-present in the world of Soviet hippies, despite their successful escapes into their apartments or into drug-induced highs and lows. While hippies

were not as feared as political dissidents or regional nationalists, the KGB still devoted considerable attention to them, initially even translating texts from American books in order to understand the new phenomenon. The hippie was declared harmful to the Soviet state—the creation of a sick, bourgeois society. There shouldn't be any hippies in Soviet society. The only problem was that Soviet hippies *did* exist. The most common Soviet menace to the Soviet hippie was the Soviet police, derogatively labeled *menty* in hippie slang. Soviet police fulfilled mostly a law-and-order function within the Soviet state, and in their view hippies were a major law-and-order problem. Hippies were frequently stopped, searched and arrested, dragged to the nearest police station, and registered as antisocial elements. The police were helped by the so-called *druzhiniki* (civilian patrols) in the major towns, often made up of conformist youths. The most famous *druzhiniki* was the so-called Berezka on Gorky Street, which began to operate in the early 1970s. Supposedly made up entirely of students from nearby Moscow State University, its task was to patrol Moscow's heaving main thoroughfare and keep it clean of hippies, black-market traders, and



other unwanted visitors. Yet the Soviet state also had heavier ammunition. Many hippies ended up in psychiatric hospitals. Some of these stays were voluntary, using a diagnosis of schizophrenia in order to escape serving in the Soviet army; some were enforced by a regime that liked to keep its streets “clean” on public holidays and during important events. The *durdoma* (hippie slang for psychiatric hospitals) were bursting during the Moscow Olympics. State repression certainly caused some hippies to quit the life. It also destroyed some people, who committed suicide in the face of the mounting pressure on them. Yet it never managed to extinguish the *Sistema*. On the contrary, Soviet hippies learned to navigate the vicissitudes of constant persecution, sometimes even making deals with the authorities. The Leningrad rock club was founded with the blessing of the KGB, which preferred to have Leningrad’s unruly rock lovers in one sanctioned place than in many secret locations. Similar thinking must have led the authorities to tolerate the annual hippie summer camp in Gauia (Latvia), which operated from 1978 until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The first camp was dispersed with machine guns, but in the following years there was an uneasy and never entirely secure truce between local police and the thousands of hippies who went through the camp.

*The guys there were saying, “Let’s go to the demonstration by the university. We’ll have a procession in memory of Lennon.” And we wanted to go forward. But I didn’t make it, two big guys stood up, one on each side, and grabbed me by the elbows. “Hey, let’s go.” I say, “I’m going over there.” “No, you’re not going there.” And they put me in a car. And from the side, it doesn’t look like a big deal. It looks like I’m going somewhere with friends. They did it in a very underhanded way. And they did the same thing to several people. I saw it. We all met up at the police station in one cell, and there was a new generation of hippies there. We all knew each other, we exchanged telephone numbers. The telephone numbers—that’s its own story—we wrote them on the insides of matchboxes so the menty couldn’t find them when they searched. They arrested my portrait of Lennon. They said, “We won’t return this until you prove that this is your portrait.” And I’m thinking, How can I prove it? I had to bring my wife the next day. They had already scratched it, but they gave it back. —(Aleksandr Iusevo - Khudozhnik, Moscow)*

## Герла (Gerla)



Soviet hippie women were known by their Russified English name *gerla*. Hippies were the first subculture in both East and West that was carried as much by women as by

men. In the West the global counterculture of the sixties also gave birth to a new wave of feminism. In the Soviet Union emancipation was a long-declared state principle, and in theory women had the same rights and duties as men. Many Soviet women, including many mothers of members of the hippie crowd, were working in responsible, although rarely top, positions. Maybe this explains why Soviet hippies had a number of “founding mothers.” Sveta Markova was a Moscow hippie from the early days. Her style, tailoring, and salon she ran in her apartment, which hosted the entire Moscow underground, set the tone for the capital’s emerging hippie scene. Her friend and disciple Sveta Barabash, a.k.a. Ofelia, continued her work after Sveta and her husband, Sasha, were forced to emigrate. For two decades, Ofelia was one of the most influential thinkers and artists in the hippie community. In the early 1970s she

assembled a band of ideologically committed and uncompromising hippies around her, who, under the name *Volosy* (hair), took part in a spectacular exhibition of nonconformist artists in 1975. Their hippie flag, which sported the slogans “World without Borders” and “Make Hair Everywhere,” caused a scandal and was confiscated by the KGB before the exhibition opened. Overnight the group sewed a new flag, which was smuggled into the building by one of its members.

Sveta and Ofelia were strong women who helped to define the female hippie role. Soviet hippie girls carved out the same freedom as their male peers, traveled up and down the country like Valia Stopshivtsa, or joined the Lviv motohippies like Natasha Konfeta. But, as in most counterculture





movements, hippie women found themselves in the position of having to sacrifice their ideals in order to support their families. With the arrival of children, they often withdrew into civilian life since Soviet hippie life was not conducive to family survival. Some couples—like Irina Martyrenko and her husband, Alik—tried to live their hippie values in remote communes, but their collective housing was under routine threat of dispersal by the authorities. Other women chose hippie life over family, leaving their children with relatives or the state. Some lost their hippie partners to drug addiction and adventure. There were no easy choices for hippie women, who often experienced hippie freedom differently from their male peers.

Women often found themselves forgotten or relegated to supporting roles, but a look back demonstrates how central the gerla was to the Soviet hippie movement as a builder and shaper of hippie ideals and practices.

*We met, and Sveta told me what hippies are and that it's not just long hair and some special trousers; that it's ideology, ideological protest against routines, protest against dullness, protest against lies, protest against grayness, protest against cruelty, against any kind of war...that was the first time I heard this, and Sveta was a journalist and spoke very well. She wasn't just speaking well, she really loved all of this. She was clean like an angel and I thought: My God, what a smart, exceptional, and beautiful girl. (Natasha Kazantseva, Moscow)*

*Here is a girl who finished school. Where should she go? There's no money for the university. I didn't know how to make it happen by myself. And not many people went to university. You had to pay a bribe. To go to the university, you had to know people. My mother said, "We don't*



have money for you to go to college, but there's the vocational school at the factory." Hence, I went to this vocational school. And then I said, "Mama, have you gotten anything from this factory? You don't have an apartment, money, not even good health. Nothing." But she still had those Soviet ideals: "A dynasty! I worked there, your father worked there, and you will!" "But I don't want to. Why? For what? So that I can slave away in that factory my whole life?" (Sveta Iurleva - Konfeta, Moscow)



I am honestly very grateful to G. because he introduced me to the sistema. Because he led me there, influenced me very strongly. I do not know how my life would have turned out, but I do not regret that it turned out the way it has. Even though, of course, it turned out that I never got pregnant. Maybe because I looked after myself badly.

We ate very badly. I destroyed all of my teeth, they hurt all the time. If you went to the dentist, they didn't treat them, just ripped them out.... I didn't have any boots—I

went around in little ballerina flats in the winter—my feet were freezing, and I ate badly because even something like an egg was a delicacy for us.... Then I got some kind of gynecological illness, an infection of the ovarian tubes... and maybe I even had some sort of—what the heck—gonorrhea, the dripper? I don't know. Obviously, there was some kind of infection, which should have been treated by a doctor. But then there were these pills.... I treated myself because at that time these illnesses were considered very shameful. (Anonymous, Cheliabinsk)



## Кайф (Kaif)



*Kaif* was the essence of Soviet hippiedom. The term comes from Arabic and is a potent reminder that not all the inspiration for Soviet hippies came from the West (even though Western hippies also knew the term *kif*). It denotes all kinds of

pleasure, usually the ecstatic kinds. While the search for new ways to alter consciousness was part of hippie exploration in the East and West alike, in the Soviet Union the desire for *kaif* flew in the face of the purpose-oriented model of life that prevailed in Soviet ideology. *Kaif* was not a worthy pursuit for a Soviet youngster whose work (something that was antithetical to *kaif*) was supposed to contribute to the construction of a socialist society. *Kaif* existed only for *kaif*'s sake, and its existence was as fleeting as its pursuit was hedonistic.

Hippie *kaif* could be achieved in many ways, but the most important and most common producer of *kaif* was rock music. The Beatles inspired and continued to dominate Soviet youths' love for the rock beats that were so different from Soviet *estrada* (folk music) or traditional pop music. Soviet youngsters were well informed when it came to the newest songs from the West. Soon they started to produce their own music, first covering Western bands, and then increasingly building up a Russian-language Soviet rock culture that became an important motor for *kaif* for an entire generation. Hippies enjoyed music in ways that violated the conventions of Soviet decorum. They danced wildly and uninhibitedly. They sang loudly to their favorite tunes. They dressed like their rock music idols, and their bands imitated the louche behavior of Western bands. No wonder that Soviet authorities often decided to literally pull the plug, switching off the electricity to stop the un-Soviet scenes in their concert venues.

Another tried and true way to



achieve *kaif* was love and sex. Soviet hippies knew and practiced free love, but without paying much attention to the term. Rather than a conscious breaking of a moral taboo, Soviet free love was part of a general desire for a freer way of life, away from Soviet norms and structures. Community, tenderness with each other, and mutual support offered a calmer version of *kaif* to youngsters who often felt acutely alienated from their Soviet environment.



If falling in love, having lots of sex, and enjoying being young and free were indeed universal pleasures, *kaif* achieved through drugs required pure Soviet ingenuity. Again, the essence—expanding consciousness, experiencing a high and the self-reflection that comes from an altered state of thinking—was characteristic of the global sixties counterculture, much of which was directed toward a more intensive experience of the self. Yet dropping acid, the storied method of the West, was not available to Soviet youngsters. Very few managed to try LSD, smuggled out of military laboratories. The rest became very inventive at making do with Soviet products. These ranged from the Latvian cleaning agent Sopal to the liberal use of morphine and codeine tablets, which were chased by other pharmaceutical uppers or downers, depending on the desired effect. The signature drug of the 1970s became the various substances processed from the poppy flower. Hippies knew *mak*, a boiled liquid derived from cooking the inner juices and scraps of the poppy fruit, and *kuknar*, a strong, hallucination-inducing tea brewed from the same material. Marijuana and hashish were easy to obtain from the Soviet countryside, and stronger strains came from Central Asia. In the late 1980s Soviet hippies increasingly experimented with their own chemical creations, including a popular injectable drug called *vint*. However, a significant part of the hippie community rejected drug use because of a desire for “clean” living and because drug use drew unwanted attention to the community as a whole.

When I was a child, about ten years old, I looked at my parents and their friends with admiration: They were strong, beautiful, and intelligent people. But, just a few years later, I suddenly began to see... that they were not getting any happier, and even more so, they were ever tormented by never-ending doubts.... I understood that I wanted something different, that I was born for something completely different.... I knew with absolute certainty that there was something different out there... and when I heard rock-and-roll in general and the Beatles in particular, I knew that help had arrived—a different existence, which defined exactly what I felt. (Boris Grebenshikov, Leningrad)



The Rubiny sang totally great. The simple composition of two guitars and a drum gave such a full rhythm-and-blues [sound] that one did not have to be ashamed of Russia in front of all of Great Britain, and certainly not in front of the handful of long-haired students, who, judging by their visible exultation, had already forgotten where they were long ago—in the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers or at some

nightclub near Piccadilly Square. Our good mood (kaif) was only interrupted when the institute officials, deciding to demonstrate their power, turned off the lights and demanded that the music be turned down. Ratskela declared into the microphone that they “were not going to play less loudly, since we can’t do that.” Overall, after about an hour, when everybody, including the officials, were drunk, the organizers disappeared... and brilliant, heartfelt rock-and-roll began. (Vladimir Boriantsev - Long, Moscow)

In general, one of the big things about being a hippie was that you had a lot of sex because usually we were all a bit repressed. At seventeen you still live at home. Most of us did not have girlfriends and then you become a hippie and you realize that you can cut out the control organ of parents. Because normally we all met and stayed the night. For example, you go to a concert and after the concert you stay over, and sex becomes an everyday part of life. (Valery Steiner – Kiss, Moscow)

## Флеты (Flety)



Meeting points in private apartments were as essential to Soviet hippies as places on the road. Some acquired legendary status in the community as regular points of assembly and were

christened *flety* (from flat, the British term for an apartment). Early hippies benefitted from the fact that many of their parents had privileged positions and often owned an apartment in the city and also a dacha in the nearby countryside. The children took over whenever their parents cleared out. At times hippies gathered in one particular room in a communal or parental apartment, often squeezing several dozens of people into a few square meters every evening. These apartments were not simply places to get together. Soon the walls were covered with psychedelic paintings, Soviet furniture was removed and replaced with mattresses on the floor and curious items found on the way to the *flet*. The apartment and their inhabitants melted into a symbolic habitat, creating little islands of hippie life within the sea of Soviet normality. Curtains were usually drawn to prevent nosy neighbors from snooping. People listened to music, smoked cigarettes and dope. Everybody could talk about everything that was anathema to the world outside the *flet*—forbidden literature, nonconformist art, news from the West. The authorities tolerated the existence of these spaces as long as they did not attempt to become communes. Any attempt to extend the world of the *flet* to a larger house, where hippies could live together, was met with eventual dispersal.

*There was a communal apartment with six families. So there were five more families there. I had a tiny room, 13 meters square. We reckoned there used to be forty-five people there. Everyone slept in a row, and some even slept in the kitchen. (Irena Sviklan, Riga)*

*We shared an apartment with Sveta's mother, but she couldn't stop us from painting the hallway floor yellow. The walls we painted red with blue dots. This combination confuses the eye and suggests three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional surface. We threw out all the furniture and put a mattress on the floor, a fence on the wall, and a telegraph pole in the corner. That's why Sveta was also known as Sveta Stolb (Pole). Every evening at least twenty people would come. I was busy making tea for everyone. It was really hard work because people stayed late into the night, and I had to get up early to go to work. But that was the life. You would sit down and smoke a joint and watch people make love to each other. (Aleksandr Penannen, Moscow)*

## Волосы и Прикиды (*Volosy i Prikidy*)



What turned a Soviet youngster into a hippie? Two essential items: *volosy* (hair) and *prikidy* (hippie clothes). Photos show that Soviet hippies were virtually indistinguishable in appearance from their American peers. The same long, flowing hair graced the heads and shoulders of girls and boys alike. The same flared jeans were adorned with flowers and

slogans of love and peace. The same folksy shirts and the same initially very short, later very long, skirts. The same predilection for going barefoot and the same irony in manipulating clothing from one context to another. [I think this references the fact that hippies liked to appropriate prison and psychiatric institution attire for their own use; any suggestion how to express this?] Yet hippie *volosy* and *prikidy* also tell a very Soviet story. Long hair was not only a statement of style but an expression of a mental attitude. This made it a red flag to the Soviet police and law-and-order patrols, who zealously cut off the hair of hippie men. But harassment and danger only made hippies prouder of their hair, often calling themselves *volosatyy* (people with hair). Clothing was a similar story. The sacrifices to acquire good hippie attire were a thousand times greater in the East than in the West. Real American jeans could cost more than a month's salary. Any kind of dress that was out of the ordinary attracted attention, not only from Soviet authorities but from ordinary people and traditional young men who scolded and attacked hippies. Like hair, flared trousers were cut off to rob hippies of their insignia. Persecution meant that clothing had an extremely high symbolic value. Soviet hippies expressed their freedom and deviance through their trousers,

jackets, shirts, and bags. No detail was coincidental. Every button carried the story of what it was like to live as a hippie in the Soviet Union, where jeans, beads, and hairbands coexisted with the shirt a hippie was forced to wear when voluntarily committed to the psychiatric hospital in order to avoid the army and the small bag that contained their identity



papers in case they got picked up by the police.

There were several eminent tailors Soviet hippies went to for singular looks. Among them, Vladimir Teplishev, better known as Tsen Baptist, occupies a special role. Not only was he one of the most productive tailors during his long hippie life, he was also a philosopher of fashion. In a beautiful, handwritten book he explained why hippies wore what they wore and how to make hippies clothes that had meaning and a message. While Tsen Baptist tailored mostly for himself and his close friends during the Soviet period, in the early 1990s he was part of a newly established hippie university that tried to pass on the wisdom of hippie thoughts and crafts to a younger generation of hippies. In 2010 Garik Sukachev hired him as a consultant for the film *Dom Solntsa* (House of the Sun), which depicts the early Moscow hippie crowd of the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the film was controversial among former hippies for its historical depiction, there is no doubt about the beauty and vitality of its costumes, which represent Teplishev's hippie ideal. Tsen Baptist died shortly after the completion of the film. The museum is proud to have a number of his later models, from the 1980s and '90s, in its collection.



*Carnival fashion—this is pure eclecticism. An unrepeatable, kaleidoscopic mash-up of styles from all times and all peoples. I put on myself everything that was, from the viewpoint of society, inappropriate—fur, old rags, chains, valuable jewelry, moth-eaten material, sometimes very fashionable stuff, mechanical and electronic equipment. I mixed male with female, winter with summer. Rags and iron, theatrical and mourning, colorful with washed-out items. In a word: the complete destruction of all laws of taste and accepted custom in society—a kind of insanity, an orgy—a protest against the seriousness inherent in society...including the custom of war and murder.*

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*Those who did not want to serve in the Soviet army voluntarily went into the durdom. "Time" in the durdom was like a second baptism. Truthfulness, honesty, love and wisdom, belief in God. In a word: "you" are different, other, not like Soviet "squares," that means you are sick and you have to be cured. You get discharged and you get out of the durdom with a diagnosis and a souvenir—a hospital blouse, on which the most important detail was the stamp of the*

hospital: Psycho-neurological Hospital Nr. 5, Ministry of Health, Moscow. At home you dyed this shirt in red, green, black... colors, decorated it with ribbon, sewed on different, pretty buttons, and put patches on the elbows. And now this was a creative, festive shirt on which the most important ornament was still the stamp (which didn't get dyed but was cut off and sewed back on like a patch). (Vladimir Teplishev – Tsen Baptist, Moscow)

“Shtany (Trousers)” by Andris Madison

Wide, wide trousers

Flapping around the legs

Ours go crazy: cool

Shameful—scream

Those who are normal,

Take them down,

I take them down—and underneath

Another pair

And so on 32 times!

—A. O. Madison, *Sochinenniiia v dvukh tomakh*, St. Petersburg, 2009, 28

Jeans were a special story. At that time they were very expensive. In the beginning they were simply not there at all. Then they showed up. Real ones. Lee, Levi's, Super Rifle, Wrangler—they cost a lot, they were simply out of reach, around 120–150 rubles. That was the salary of an engineer, maybe even more. We did a kind of DIY version. We bought cheap, thick cotton trousers in the *rabochaia odezhda* (work clothes) store. They had pockets in front and back like jeans and a real zipper. They cost seven rubles. We took them to a dye place for two rubles and had them colored indigo. Then we dunked them into a bucket of water and a little bit of latex, some kind of glue. They shrank and hardened and became very stiff—simply awesome! We put some kind of label at the back—just anything! This really could be anything, even something from women's trousers, as long as it was in a foreign language. We packed them up as small parcels, only kept a few, and sold them as Finnish jeans for sixty rubles. This meant the complete sum was seven plus two was nine, and we sold them for sixty. (Sergei Leshenko – Baske, Moscow)

It was simply producing art. ... There was a person, Azazello, a Moscow hippie. He and his wife did simply ravishing things; they were specialists in leather. They made love with leather. ... and then there was Kiss—he came here as a guest too. He also showed his art. I had some tapestry material, and he made some astonishing trousers for me with some really pretty appliqués. People simply made their own stuff, and an architecture of fashion appeared. (Aleksandr Rappaport, Leningrad)

## Трасса (*Trassa*)



Soviet hippies wanted freedom more than anything else. This desire for freedom had inner and outer aspects. Soviet hippies attempted to gain inner freedom by distancing themselves from the values of

ordinary Soviet society, by extending their consciousness and finding peace within their own community. Outer freedom was harder, if not impossible, to obtain. With the exception of Jews emigrating to Israel and the United States, no one was allowed to leave the USSR for good. Temporary travel abroad was restricted to the most trusted Soviet citizens (and Soviet hippies were considered the most “untrustworthy” Soviet citizens there were). There was no international trail for Soviet hippies, but the Soviet Union was large and Soviet hippies were ingenious. In the late 1960s they had already discovered their own “West” in the Baltic states, their own Goa in the Crimea, and, from the mid-1970s onward, their own Asia beyond the Urals and in Central Asia. The freedom of the Soviet road—the *trassa*—was one of the driving forces of the *sistema*. Hippies traveled to the most remote corners of the Soviet empire—alone, in couples, or in groups. They split up and reassembled as they pleased, vexing the watchful KGB with their unpredictability and surprising capacity to meet up despite governmental interference. Soviet hippies hitchhiked, jumped on freight trains, and walked their way through the Soviet republics. There

were certain fixed points such as the opening of the travel season in Tallinn (in Estonia) on May 1 and later the annual summer camp in Latvia, near Riga. Some hippies looked for solitude in the Altai Mountains. Some looked for sociability in



Gurzuf in the Crimea. But with every trip they took, they defied the stagnation that had beset Soviet society under Brezhnev. The trassa was a very Soviet piece of freedom.

*I was part of the first wave of hippies. In '65 I was still in school and I was already listening to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. In '69 hippies came to my place, they came barefoot from Estonia. And my mom wouldn't accept them, so I went on the road with them and left home. (Irena Sviklan, Riga)*

*At the beginning of summer, I quit my job and took a good look at the Soviet road atlas and decided to do the medium hippie round.... (Gena Zaitsev, Leningrad)*

*A crowd of hippies was coming towards us, very colorful with long hair, and at that time I looked cool too. So we went up to them. And the meeting was like this: "Great! Where are you from?" "We're from Moscow." "And where are you staying?" "Well, we're looking for a place to stay." And Gena says—and that's when I found out that he was Gena—he had a certain piece of jewelry, he gave it to me later... I had a keychain with a picture of John Lennon and I needed something else with the Beatles, and he was wearing that kind of icon of the band. I say, "Oh, you have the Beatles there!" He says, "Yes. And how do you feel about the Beatles?" I say, "The Beatles mean everything to me!" "Everything!" he says. "You can stay over at my place!" (Aleksandr Iusevo, - Khudozhnik, Moscow)*



The museum would like to thank the following people for generously passing their archives to the museum

Gennadyi Zaitsev

Alexei Polev (Sheakspear)+

Aleksandr Eganov (Dzhuzi)+

Anatolyi Kalabin (Azazello) +

Sasha Penannen (Kashei)  
and Sveta Markova (Tsarevna Legushka)+

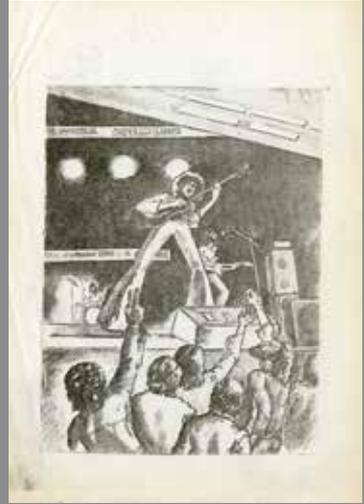
Elena Toporova

Tatiana Teplisheva

Ailk Oliseevich

Natalia Mamedova

Veronika Voloshina (Ioko)



Special thanks also to those who loaned objects to the exhibition

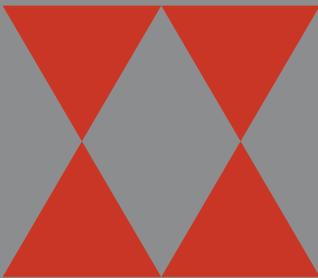
Ima von Wenden

Aleksandr Iusevo

Igor Ventslavskii

*Acquisition of the Soviet Hippie Collection was made possible by the generous support of the Archive of Modern Conflict. Exhibition funding and support for Socialist Flower Power was provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.*

Exhibition concept: Juliane Fürst  
Exhibition design: Joes Segal and Amanda Roth



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10808 Culver Boulevard | Culver City, CA | 90230  
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