

# **Nationalism and Xenophobia in the Music and Fan Base of a Russian Rock Band**

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## **Introduction:**

Russian Rock music has been the subject of several books and articles in the last two decades. Approaches have varied from journalistic<sup>1</sup> to the sociological<sup>2</sup> to critical literary analysis of song lyrics.<sup>3</sup> While more recent texts have addressed the role perceptions of national identity have played in the creation of Russian rock lyrics by music artists, the presence of nationalistic and xenophobic themes in Russian rock has not been the subject of a critical analysis. More importantly, why nationalist and xenophobic themes have an appeal for certain segments of Russian rock fans has not been thoroughly investigated. That is, most studies which analyze Russian rock have taken lyric text as the unit of analysis, largely ignoring how audiences and fans bases are maintained, and how fans construct social groups by identifying with the message an artist conveys. This study analyzes the history, music, public persona, and fan base of one of Russia's most enduring Rock stars: Konstantin Kinchev, and his band "Alisa." Kinchev's career has taken many turns, from an anti-communist satirist and rock rebel counterculture icon in the 1980s, to a self-proclaimed Pagan in the early 1990s, to a sensitive self-reflective pop star in the late 1990s, his transformation during the Putin era can be characterized by both a new conservative representation of Orthodox Christianity and an emergent

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<sup>1</sup> Artemy Troitsky, *Back in The USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber Inc, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Cushman, *Notes from the Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia*. (Albany, SUNY Press, 1995); Sabrina Petra Ramet et. Al, *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), Hilary Pilkington, *Looking West: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Mark Yoffe and Andrea Collins, "Conceptual Carnival: National Elements in Russian Nationalist Rock Music" in *Rock'n'Roll and Nationalism: A Multinational Perspective*, ed. Mark Yoffe and Andrea Collins, 97-120. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005); J. Friedman and A. Weiner. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Holy Rus' and Its Alternatives in Russian Rock Music." In *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society since Gorbachev*. edited by Adele Marie Barker, 110- 137, (USA: Duke

ethnocultural Russian nationalism with an implicit antagonism towards non-ethnic Russians.<sup>4</sup> Through the years, Kinchev has maintained a moderate sized, but highly committed fan base, much of it organized into a fan club called the “Army of Alisa.”

The fact that this work has limited itself in scope to merely one music artist is not meant to suggest that this is the most important or prominent band in the Russian rock milieu. Alisa has been selected specifically because of its uniquely dedicated and organized fan culture. Other Russian rock artists may have wider audiences, but few have been as fanatical as the self-proclaimed “alisomany” and their fan organization “the Army of Alisa.”<sup>5</sup> The existence of this fan culture, and its organizational structure, allows the researcher to conduct a more thorough analysis of the relationship between the band and fans than would be possible in most other cases. Furthermore, as one of the original ‘perestroika rock’ bands of the 1980s Leningrad scene, Alisa’s notoriety and status as both a Russian rock classic and contemporary rock group makes it possible to evaluate how themes have developed over a number of years.

### **Aim of Research:**

The goal of this research is to establish why nationalistic and xenophobic themes resonated among a particular audience of Russian rock fans between the years 2000 and 2008.<sup>6 7</sup> Classical theorists of nationalism, such as Gellner, argued that the collapse of

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University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> I prefer the phrase *ethnocultural* nationalism over *ethnic* because of the emphasis placed on other cultural criteria in addition to language in the case being studied. See Chaim Gans, “Nationalist ideologies-a normative typology ‘Cultural nationalism and statist nationalism.’” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that the term ‘alisoman’ has fallen out of favor among certain fans recently. Changes in fan nomenclature are discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> Nationalism will be defined here according to Rogers Brubaker as a “particular language, political idiom, or way of using” the category nation. In Kinchev’s lyrics, ‘nation’ is used most frequently as way to

communist authoritarian systems, resulting ideological vacuum, and instability would potentially promote “aggressive nationalism.”<sup>8</sup> In this context, Gellner argued, nationalism could transform xenophobia into a dangerous phenomenon. Gellner wrote, “by linking dislike of the Other into citizenship rights, nationalism turns xenophobia from what may in favorable circumstances, be a mere human foible, into a destructive, dangerous force.”<sup>9</sup> If this is the case, however, one would expect that popular expressions of nationalist sentiment and a related form of xenophobia in popular culture would have been the most pronounced during the post communist transition period of the 1990s. In the case being studied, though, it is in the relatively more stable years of the Putin presidency when expressions of xenophobia and a related ethnocultural nationalism are exhibited by both artist and fan.

My hypothesis, is that ethnocultural Russian nationalism can serve as an accessible cognitive frame, available to music artists and fans, as a way to make sense of their surrounding environment even during a period of relative economic stability. Furthermore, it is music’s uniquely social properties as an art form, that is how music can convey emotion and a sense of collective identity, as well as how it can be used to make sense of the ‘everyday’ which allows such framing to succeed.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, the music and lyrics themselves are not the only factor which attracts fans to the band, but also the

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“assert ‘ownership’ of the polity on behalf of a ‘core’ ethnocultural ‘nation’ distinct from the citizenry of the state as a whole, and thereby to define or redefine the state as the state *of* and *for* that ‘core’ nation.” (see terminology section); Rogers Brubaker, “In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism,” *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2, (June 2004). via JSTOR, <http://jstor.org>

<sup>7</sup> Xenophobia will be defined according to Gellner as “hostility to the other.” (see terminology section); Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism and Xenophobia,” in *New Xenophobia in Europe* ed. Bernd Baumgartl and Adrian Favel, 7 (London: Kluwer Law International, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism and Xenophobia,” 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Tia Denora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=105487891>.

socialization process of interacting with a group of individuals with music preferences as well often similar attitudes. That is, fans are aware that other members of the fan base identify with the lyrical themes and messages portrayed through song, and as such are attracted to membership in the fan base and engage actively in constructing a fan culture.

### Terminology:

This study will use Rogers Brubaker's description of nationalism which characterizes “‘**nation**’ as a category of practice, not a category of analysis” and **nationalism** as “a particular language, a political idiom, a way of using that word or category.”<sup>11</sup> Different forms of nationalism, Brubaker argues, ultimately stem from different usages and conceptions of this category ‘nation.’ Brubaker typifies a number of ways the category ‘nation’ can be used by different nationalist actors. In Kinchev’s song lyrics one particular style of using the category ‘nation’ will be most relevant. Brubaker explains:

the category nation can be used in another way, not to appeal to a ‘national’ identity transcending ethnolinguistic, ethnoreligious, or ethnoregional distinctions, but rather to assert ‘ownership’ of the polity on behalf of a ‘core’ ethnocultural ‘nation’ distinct from the citizenry of the state as a whole, and thereby to define or redefine the state as the state *of* and *for* that ‘core’ nation.<sup>12</sup>

I use Brubaker’s definition of nationalism because it highlights the rhetorical nature of nationalism as a social phenomena, as opposed to the political ideological emphasis of classical definitions like Breuilly’s or Gellner’s.<sup>13</sup> This paper makes use of

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<sup>11</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism,” 117.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Gellner- “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political

music sociologist Simon Frith's conception of song lyrics as a "form of rhetoric or oratory" which are treated "in terms of the persuasive relationship set up between singer and listener."<sup>14</sup> If lyrics are treated as a form of rhetoric, and nationalism as a 'style of language,' a better framework is provided for assessing nationalist lyrical representations in music than if using a more political or ideological definition of nationalism. It will be shown that Kinchev's song lyrics often make claims on behalf of a 'core' nation of Russians, which Kinchev distinguishes from the citizenry of the Russian Federation as a whole. In Kinchev's music, and moreover in fan discussions, this ethnocultural 'core' is characterized by an identification with Orthodox Christianity, the Russian language, a shared sense of history, a perception of 'Slavic' ancestry, and in occasionally racist conceptions of bloodlines. This claim is reproduced both in Kinchev's press interviews, and also is often reflected in the discussions which fans have on the internet. It should be pointed out, that Kinchev's style of nationalist rhetoric is not of what Chaim Gans has called "statist nationalism," but is better typified as "ethnocultural nationalism."<sup>15</sup> Claims are made on behalf of the 'core' ethnocultural nation as to how the state ought to be, but claims are not made on behalf of the state. I use the term **nationalistic** to refer to lyrical representations and expressions which allude to this claim.

**Xenophobia** will be defined according to Gellner as simple "hostility to the Other." However, this paper will not argue, as Gellner does, that nationalism necessarily transforms xenophobia into "a destructive dangerous force," but rather will examine

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and the national unit should be congruent." Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 1. John Breuilly- "The term 'nationalism' is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments." John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Frith. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 166.

<sup>15</sup> Chaim Gans, 9.

whether Alisa fans exhibit xenophobic attitudes and if so how these attitudes relate to Kinchev's lyric content and nationalistic lyrical representations. To analyze song lyrics and fans expressions, which conflate the Other with a social threat, I use Langmuir's terminology and description of "**xenophobic assertions.**" Langmuir has written:

Within a xenophobic assertion, the meaning of the outgroup label is supplied and delimited by grammatical connection with some threat, not by the empirical characteristics of the outgroup. The subject of a xenophobic assertion is not the outgroup; it is a felt social menace.<sup>16</sup>

Through exploring the intersections of nationalism, xenophobia, and rock music, I hope to be able to provide a better understanding of the relationship between nationalism and xenophobia. I will argue that strong 'xenophobic assertions,' while perhaps not a vital component of every nationalist movement, nevertheless, can be very easily incorporated into nationalist representations in Rock music in the Russian context.

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<sup>16</sup> Gavin L. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press,

**Chapter 1** examines the pertinent literature existing on the study of Russian rock music, as well as theories for analyzing popular music within its social context. The purpose of this chapter is to refine an appropriate approach towards analyzing the presence of nationalist and xenophobic themes in the music of a Russian rock band and its audience.

**Chapter 2** first provides an overview of Alisa's career and discography, ranging from 1985 when Kinchev joined the band, until the present. The second half examines the thematic progression of Alisa's lyrics and recordings between 2000 and 2007. As this study is primarily concerned with representations and interpretations of nationalism which arise during Kinchev's latest manifestation as a self proclaimed 'national-patriot,' the focus is on the period of his career spanning from 2000 to the present. However, some of Kinchev's earlier work is also examined in order to explain how the themes Kinchev uses have developed and changed across the Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin periods.

**Chapter 3** examines two different Alisa fan forums to see whether the nationalistic and xenophobic themes presented in Alisa's music are reflected in the opinions and attitudes of the band's fans.<sup>17</sup> The first forum that is examined is the Army of Alisa forum on Alisa's official website. This is the most used forum (14,000+ registered users). The second forum that is examined is that of the Red-Black Hundred, a special organization that was created in 2002, for "national patriotic" members of the Army of Alisa.<sup>18</sup> This

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1990), 330.

<sup>17</sup> Forum -**Internet discussion group**: an Internet discussion group for participants with common interests (Microsoft works dictionary). This paper refers to a forums in their entirety. Within forums there are often subdivisions for discussing certain topics. For example the official forum on Alisa's website contains subdivisions for continuing discussions of Religion, Politics, Army organization matters, Songs, and other topics.

<sup>18</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. <http://www.alisa.net/forum/> (accessed April 23, 2008); Forum KCHS <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/> (accessed April 23, 2008); also see Krasno-Chernaya Sotnya, KCHS official site [http://www.k4s.ru/1\\_2-3.html](http://www.k4s.ru/1_2-3.html) (accessed April 23, 2008).

forum is relatively small with only some 103 registered users.<sup>19</sup> An interview with a Red-Black Hundred organizer from the group's St. Petersburg chapter was conducted in order to discover more about this group.

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<sup>19</sup> Forum KCHS <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/> (accessed April 23, 2008)

## **Chapter 1.1. Refining Rock: Developing an Approach**

Before considering how themes of ethnicity and nationality in Russian rock have been documented, represented, and interpreted by different scholars and writers, it may be fruitful to briefly consider some theoretical and methodological approaches that have been developed for analyzing popular music as a cultural and social phenomenon. For the purposes of the research being considered here, a useful starting point are two essays from Theodore Adorno's *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (first published 1962), these are the essays "Popular Music" and "Function." Adorno's work in these pieces is largely theoretical, and is intended to be a starting point to inspire further empirical research.<sup>20</sup> However, even in this relatively early work of sociology of popular music, Adorno identifies two highly important aspects of popular music that continue to be investigated. These aspects are music's concurrent psychological and sociological components. Adorno explains:

In an imaginary but psychologically emotion-laden domain, the listener who remembers a hit song will turn into the song's ideal subject, into the person for whom the song ideally speaks. At the same time, as one of many who identify with that fictitious subject, that musical I, he will feel his isolation ease as he himself feels integrated into the community of "fans." In whistling such a song he bows to a ritual of socialization, although beyond this unarticulated stirring of the moment his isolation continues unchanged.<sup>21</sup>

Adorno's writings in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* are important because his theory recognizes the important social function that music plays for individuals. Music, as an art form, seems to be unique in its inherently social

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<sup>20</sup> Theodore W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (New York: Continuum, 1989), vii.

<sup>21</sup> Adorno, 27.

characteristics. This emphasis on music's ability to engage individuals in a "ritual of socialization" and to imagine themselves as being integrated "into the *community* of "fans." seems to be particularly salient when considering music artists who evoke the nation in their music, especially as Anderson's conception of the nation as an "imagined community" has become so ubiquitous in the study of nationalism.<sup>22</sup> However, as Simon Frith later pointed out in his seminal *Sociology of Rock* (later revised and re-titled as *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll*), Adorno's conception of popular music assumes complete passivity on the part of music fans and "the actual use of music by pop fans is scarcely examined."<sup>23</sup> While Adorno theorizes how passive listeners use popular music to psychologically experience a feeling of socialization, he does not explain how more actively involved fans use music as a means to actually socialize with one another.

Despite his contentions over some of Adorno's claims, Frith makes a similar claim when considering music's social function and the psychological role music can play for the individual. Frith writes "Music, we could say, provides us with an intensely subjective sense of being sociable. Whether jazz or rap for African -Americans or nineteenth-century chamber music for German Jews in Israel, it both articulates and offers the immediate *experience* of collective identity."<sup>24</sup> It is not always just a sense of belonging to an abstract "community of fans" as in Adorno's conception, but instead an imagined psychological perception of belonging to a very specific group of people.

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<sup>22</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Frith. *Sound effects: Youth leisure and the politics of rock'n'roll* (London: Constable and Company, 1983), 45.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Frith. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 273.

Moreover, as in Frith's examples of African-Americans and German Jews, the perceived collective identity of the fan group can occur concurrently with other perceived identities and it seems quite possible that in some contexts these parallel identities may even reinforce one another. In this context it may be very accessible for music artists in certain circumstances to act as nationalist entrepreneurs and even to engage in the kind of ethnic or national "group reification" noted by Rogers Brubaker's in *Ethnicity Without Groups*.<sup>25</sup>

Turning away from the theoretical literature, there have been a small handful of sociological studies and social histories (Ramet 1993, Cushman 1995, Pilkington 2002) that have specifically analyzed Russian rock. Sabrina Petra Ramet's work in *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* provides a detailed social history of Russian rock music with a focus on the so-called "perestroika rock" of the 1980s, including some analysis of the music and history of the Alisa. Ramet, Zamascikov, and Bird's contribution to *Rocking the State* "The Soviet Rock Scene," focuses predominantly on how certain segments of the Russian rock milieu were highly politicized, particularly in the 1980s, and how Russian Rock was often used in opposition to the Soviet State. Ramet's piece does not dedicate much analysis to the presence of xenophobia or nationalism in Russian rock, and perhaps this is a testament to the fact it was published in 1993 before a handful of groups, most notably Alisa, Civil Defense, DDT, et al. started incorporating lyrical representations of nationalism in their music. Ramet makes mention of the fact that some bands among the heavy metal fringe "have become associated with right -wing politics and xenophobia."<sup>26</sup> However, the trend is merely identified, but not investigated or analyzed.

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<sup>25</sup>Rogers Brubaker. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10.

Ramet makes an interesting claim in the introduction to *Rocking the State*, which appear elsewhere including Hilary Pilkington's interviews with Russian youth. Ramet writes:

The social functions performed by rock music necessarily vary across time and space. Certain societies have more deeply rooted traditions of bard poets, and these traditions can sometimes be translated into a rock idiom.<sup>27</sup>

Ramet argues that as a result lyrics are more important in Russian rock than in for example the American or British rock music traditions. This is a claim which runs throughout Mark Yoffe's "Conceptual Carnival: National Elements in Russian Nationalist Rock Music"(2006) as well. Whether such arguments are merely a justification for a predominantly lyric text based analysis of Russian rock is difficult to determine, but at least from Hilary Pilkington's empirical research it does seem that the interpretation of lyrics plays an important role at least for the sample of Russian youth she interviewed.<sup>28</sup>

Hilary Pilkington's empirical research with Russian youth, "Reconfiguring the West: Style and Music in Russian Youth Cultural Practice," (2002) sheds a considerable amount of light on how identity perceptions of self-understanding and group identification are present in not only how Russian rock is produced, but also how it is interpreted by audiences. Pilkington's study found that among Russian youth, who identified Russian rock as a preferred genre, the most common explanation was the importance of the words and that Russian rock was more "authentic" and had more

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<sup>26</sup> Ramet, 207.

<sup>27</sup> Ramet, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Pilkington, Hilary et al. *Looking West: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002, 185.

“soul” than western rock.<sup>29</sup> These youth, who listened to the groups Alisa, Civil Defense, Nautilus Pompilius, and Agata Kristi among others, maintained a “romantic notion,” according to Pilkington, that ‘authenticity’ and ‘soul’ is what differentiates Russian rock from western music, which is considered more commercial and less genuine.<sup>30</sup> These perceptions of the ‘West’ as being soulless and spiritually deficient compared to Russia are also identifiable in the text based lyric analysis of Mark Yoffe’s “Conceptual Carnival: National Elements in Russian Nationalist Rock Music”(2006) , and Julia P. Friedman and Adam Weiner’s essay “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Holy Rus’ and Its Alternatives in Russian Rock Music”(1999).

The presence of nationalistic rhetoric and themes in Russian rock music has not been thoroughly investigated in scholarly literature. The two short texts that have approached the subject (Yoffe 2005, Friedman and Weiner 1999) have relied almost exclusively on a literary analysis approach. While these texts have been very valuable in interpreting and deciphering the complex lyrical coding that is often used by Russian rock lyricists, there seems to be a theoretical disconnect between these pieces and the sociological studies of Ramet (1993), Cushman (1995), and Pilkington (2002). Furthermore, neither Yoffe’s piece nor Friedman and Weiner’s, make use or mention of any of the theoretical approaches to nationalism that have been developed over the last few decades. This is not necessarily the fault of the authors, as their literary oriented works are more interested in the poetic language, symbolic representations and word usage of Russian rock lyricists, but as a result the pieces fail to elucidate a seemingly tenuous relationship between Russian rock music and nationalism.

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<sup>29</sup> Pilkington, Hilary et al. *Looking West: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002, 185.

Yoffe's comparison of today's rockers with Dostoyevsky's 19<sup>th</sup> century "underground man" may be relevant, but it does little to explain what social and political forces are contributing to the way in which nationalistic sentiment in Russian rock is both produced by artists and received by Russian rock fans, or why nationalism has a particular resonance for certain artists and among certain audiences.<sup>31</sup> From Simon Frith's sociological study of rock music in Britain and the United States, we know that there is a complex interplay between music production and music reception, especially in the context of analyzing the products of so-called counterculture and fringe movements.<sup>32</sup> To merely reduce current Russian rock trends to a reenactment of the Slavophile-Westernizer debates of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is to analyze Russian rock using the same categories and ideas of Russian rock personalities themselves, some of whom apparently have a fondness for 19<sup>th</sup> century historical works according to Friedman and Weiner.<sup>33 34</sup> This is not to say that certain cognitive schema and frames which place Russian rock in its historical context are necessarily wrong, but rather that in order to analyze current trends in Russian rock, it needs to be contextualized within its wider social context, and avoid reproducing the arguments of nationalist entrepreneurs themselves. As Brubaker has written in reference to understanding ethno-political entrepreneurs, but which may be relevant for an analysis in the cultural field as well, "We must, of course take vernacular categories and participants' understandings seriously, for they are partly constitutive of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Yoffe, "Conceptual Carnival: National Elements in Russian Nationalist Rock Music" in *Rock'n'Roll and Nationalism: A Multinational Perspective*, ed. Mark Yoffe and Andrea Collins, 103 (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Simon Frith, 51.

<sup>33</sup> Julia P. Friedman and Adam Weiner, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Holy Rus' and Its Alternatives in Russian Rock Music." In *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society since Gorbachev*, ed. Adele Marie Barker, 112. (USA: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Friedman and Weiner, 118.

our objects of study. But we should not uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis*.”<sup>35</sup>

Texts that have relied predominantly on the interpretation of lyrics by way of literary criticism as a method for analyzing the relationship between nationalism or national identity and Russian rock have been less explanatory than those which have taken a sociological or social historical approach as a method of analysis. This may reflect differences in academic disciplines, however, the problems with the lyric text-based pieces does not seem to be so much their approach as how they interpret the results and the subsequent claims they infer from their analysis. This is unfortunate because as is exhibited in the theoretical frameworks developed by Adorno and Frith, the social psychological function of music, that is its apparent ability to engage an individual in a socialization process and experience of collectivity, suggests that music and the cognitive processes of nationality and ethnicity may be able to reinforce one another in certain contexts. It is surprisingly therefore, that the text based pieces, which are the only pieces to deal specifically with Russian rock music and nationalism, do not take advantage of the existence of sociological theories and frameworks for understanding rock music or nationalism.

### **Chapter 1.2. Making Meaning: Music and Lyrics**

As has been discussed, lyrics play an important role in how Russian Rock is understood by fans, and how fans use Russian Rock as a basis to construct social networks. The point here, however, is not to answer if Russian lyrics are really as

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<sup>35</sup> Brubaker, 10.

“hegemonic” as some authors have claimed, but rather to point out that lyrical interpretations and the lyrics themselves are nonetheless vital to how fans understand and interpret Alisa’s music.<sup>36</sup> Alisa makes their lyrics readily available to fans. The band’s website contains a highly detailed discography with full lyric texts for literally everything they have recorded and released.<sup>37</sup> Konstantin Kinchev often keeps track of the exact date on which he penned a tune and adds this to the web publication, potentially allowing fans to interpret meaning by placing it in a certain political-historical context. The Army of Alisa internet fan forum, has entire subsections dedicated to discussions about lyric texts.<sup>38</sup>

In later chapters, this study will look at how Alisa fans use the meaning(s) derived from Kinchev’s lyrics as a basis for the construction of their social network, how these meanings are transformed into fan group values, and how divisions within the fan base may stem from different interpretations, or levels of interpretation of the ‘meaning.’ This study will not attempt to argue that certain songs have one correct interpretation or ‘meaning,’ as the meaning that is attributed to a song depends largely on who is doing the listening. Instead, I examine the major themes which Kinchev has portrayed in his lyrics and how these themes may contribute to fans’ interpretations. In chapter 3, I consider how fans use these themes in their interpretations. The purpose here is not to take Kinchev’s music as the unit of analysis itself, but rather to consider songs as factors which fans use to construct social communities built around interpretations of themes

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<sup>36</sup> see Yngvar B. Steinholt, “You can’t rid a song of its words: notes on the hegemony of lyrics in Russian rock songs,” *Popular Music* (2003) Volume 22/1. Cambridge University Press, pp. 89-108.  
<http://colodez.spb.ru/kladovaya/rusrock.html>

<sup>37</sup> see Alisa.net, Alisa’s official website; official discography and lyric transcripts available at <http://www.alisa.net/diskografiya.php>

<sup>38</sup> see Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa <http://www.alisa.net/forum/> (accessed April 27, 2008)

represented in song.

Chapter 2 examines how the lyrical themes which Kinchev uses in his songs have progressed, changed and developed during the band's career starting in the mid 1980s. One cannot, however, simply divorce song lyrics from musical accompaniment and treat them as text, as the product we are concerned with is after all music. Fans primarily experience Alisa through listening to compact discs or mp3.s, or going to concerts. To understand how fans interpret meaning and relate to a song, one must consider the way words are sung and how instrumentation is used to underscore, represent, and interpret different emotions musically. As a result, Simon Frith's treatment of lyrics as rhetoric, rather than mere text, will be used throughout this paper. Frith writes:

Lyrics...are a form of rhetoric or oratory; we have to treat them in terms of the persuasive relationship set up between singer and listener. From this perspective, a song doesn't exist to convey the meaning of words; rather, the words exist to convey the meaning of the song.<sup>39</sup>

Frith's description of lyrics as rhetoric is also particularly relevant when considering how nationalism can be represented thematically within song. Using Brubaker's definition of nationalism as "a particular language," or "a way of using" the category 'nation,' lyrics themselves may serve as a way of asserting 'ownership' of on behalf of a 'core' ethnocultural 'nation.'<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, 166.

<sup>40</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism."

## 2. Music and History: Thematic Developments

### 2.1 Perestroika Rock:

Alisa was founded in 1983. Konstantin Kinchev joined as lead vocalist in 1985, and soon took over most of the songwriting responsibilities for the band.<sup>41</sup> Before 1985, Alisa had been a semi-legal unofficial band that was not recognized by the communist authorities. In the mid 1980s, the reforms of Perestroika and Glasnost made it possible for such bands to start recording and releasing albums. In 1985, the band released “Energy” its first album on Melodiya, which was the state music recording monopoly at the time.<sup>42</sup> Energy contained the now frequently cited hits “My Generation,” an anti-Communist anthem for disaffected Soviet youth, and “Experimenter of the Upwards-Downwards Movement,” a well known satire of Marxist dialectics and the official state ideology.<sup>43</sup> Kinchev delivers the lyrics of “Experimenter” with a cynical and ironic tone over a backdrop of synthesizers:

*Experimenter of upward-downward movement,  
He is forming new models of consciousness.  
He is perfectly shaven, prim and proper.  
He is carrying his brick to the altar of the  
universe.  
Experimenter of upward-downward movement,  
He sees space where I see [a] wall.*<sup>44</sup>

Alisa was a controversial band in the 1980s, not only for its mockery and antagonism directed towards the official state ideology, but also because of a reputation for wild unruly concerts. The band grabbed the limelight for a short while in 1987 when a journalist levied a charge that Kinchev had said ‘hail Hitler’ at a show and was promoting

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<sup>41</sup> Birgit Beumers, *Pop Culture Russia! Media, Art, Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2005), 224.

<sup>42</sup> Ramet, 191

<sup>43</sup> Birgit Beumers, 224.

<sup>44</sup> Translation by Joanna Stingray from Ramet, *Rocking the State*, 193.

fascism, this claim was later determined to be false by the authorities and a public apology was given to Kinchev in the newspaper.<sup>45</sup> A decade later, the media would again accuse Kinchev of fascism although in different context and for different reasons. Still, Kinchev's career may be a good example of the maxim "there's no such thing as bad publicity," and the advantageous use of such publicity continues in the 2000s. Alisa's next two albums "Blockade" and "the Sixth Forester" were similar thematically similar to "Energy." Pairing a sense of omnipresent gloom with the one of the classic questions of Russian history, "Who is to be Blamed?" almost always directed at the communist authorities and state ideology. Another classic question "What is to be done?," was answered typically as in one song "Rock'n'roll, this is all." (1989) These two questions, "What is to be done" and "Who is to blame" lay dormant for most of the Yeltsin years, only to reemerge in 2000 with different answers.

## **2.2 The Yelstin Years: From Pagan to Pop**

Kinchev's brief "Pagan phase" is typically described as being centered around the album "Shabash" in 1991.<sup>46</sup> In 1992, Kinchev visited Jeruslaem, and subsequently was baptized and converted to Orthodox Christianity the same year.<sup>47</sup> His first 'Orthodox' albums, "For Those Who Have Fallen Down From the Moon" (1993) and "the Black Mark" (1994) contain mostly themes of spiritual self-reflection and solitude found in

<sup>45</sup> see "Alisa, with a Slanting Bang" at *Alisa.net*, for a translation of the original article in "SMENA" 22.11.87 by V. Kokosov accusing Kinchev. [http://www.alisa.net/prensa\\_eng.php?action=1987&disk=press31](http://www.alisa.net/prensa_eng.php?action=1987&disk=press31); and Andrei Burlaka, "Alisa," *Musika KM.RU-Musika*, [http://music.km.ru/encyclop.asp?s=E7692E3E6D5346C183B\\_B3DD0DA695C59&topicnumber=90](http://music.km.ru/encyclop.asp?s=E7692E3E6D5346C183B_B3DD0DA695C59&topicnumber=90)

<sup>46</sup> *Novaya Gazeta* "Malye narodtsy XXI veka «ARMIYA ALISA»: KRASNOE I CHERNOE Ryadom so starymi alisomanami stali poyavlyat'sya yunye fany, chasto s britymi golovami," February 12, 2007. <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/10/39.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

<sup>47</sup> *Gazeta <Zavtra>* "Konstantin Kinchev: <My - pravoslavnye!>" N 26 (291), June-July, 1999

nature.<sup>48</sup>

In 1996, Kinchev released “Jazz,” an apolitical album with a smoother and lighter sound than previous records, featuring the song “Rain” which received radio airplay.<sup>49</sup> Alisa’s next album, “The Fool” (1997), features an increased number of references to God and ‘soil.’ “The Fool” is the last album Kinchev released during the Yeltsin era. It features “Mama,” an early ode to the Motherland. Kinchev sings :

*It seems that it has become a rule in my land  
Everything is not fine, everything is not like in other people's lands  
We either languish at nights or drink before sunrise.  
If one looks from the outside - it's both funny and sad  
Oh, mama, mama, I feel pain.  
In my land everyone has become blind in the truth  
Brother goes against brother, son drags father into sin,  
In my land there is a sickle instead of an ear,  
Smoke instead of sun, collar instead of freedom.  
Thus, century after century we have neither house nor home,  
After prison we became poor at the meeting point of the epochs.  
We would not help in a fight, but if a war would happen,  
If God helps, we will win, we will win, if God helps.  
And the land has one name - Holy Rus'  
Bowed down on our knees, we call it mother  
We are all just children, of hers, on her breasts  
Suckling pups, will mother save us?<sup>50</sup>*

The general tone of ‘Mama’ and is one of earnest sincerity, whereas Kichev’s anti-communist songs were always sung in a mocking satirical voice. The song portrays the people of the Russian Federation as being in a state of moral decline, salvation lies in turning to God and honoring a benevolent personified Motherland. This conception of moral and spiritual salvation as being realized through a combination of religion and praise for the national territory becomes an important theme on Alisa’s albums in the

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<http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/99/291/71.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

<sup>48</sup> see Alisa.net, Alisa’s official website; official discography and lyric transcripts available at <http://www.alisa.net/diskografiya.php>

<sup>49</sup> *Argumenty i Fakty*, “Press-konferentsiya, posvyaschennaya vykhodu al'boma ‘SOLNTSEVOROT,’” February 25, 2000 Moskva, <http://www.alisa.ru/prensa.php?action=2000&disk=press50>

<sup>50</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, “Mama” *Duren*, 1997, Extraphone Ex 97038  
lyrics:<http://www.alisa.net/disk1/duren.htm#mama> All translations are by the author unless noted. I have not attempted to reproduce Kinchev’s meter and rhyme. Special thanks to Daria Ukhova for additional

2000s. However, the song is not vindictive like later works. There is no component of xenophobia in this period and no abstract or definable Other. The moral decline Kinchev identifies is the result of sin and drinking, not an essentialized group of people.

### **2.3 The Putin era: Swastikas, Slavs, and Others:**

In 2000, Konstantin Kinchev held a press conference to promote the release of Alisa's new album "Solstice." The meeting's focal point was the album's cover, which was adorned with leftward facing equilateral crosses, that is mirror images of swastikas. Soon after, Nashe Radio, Moscow's premier rock radio station at the time, and a key promoter of Russian language rock music announced a ban on the CD. Nashe Radio founder Misha Korlyzev cited not only its provocative cover and ominous symbols, but also argued some of Solstice's songs "cross a moral border," although he did not specify which tracks in particular he had in mind.<sup>51</sup> Kinchev argued in defense that the swastika was an ancient Orthodox symbol having nothing to do with Nazism. Referring to the album's cover Kinchev argued "The left facing swastika is a symbol of the grace of the holy spirit."<sup>52</sup> A claim that became familiar among his fans in later years.

Why Kinchev would jeopardize his reputation and flirt with one of Nazism's most infamous symbols is still not clear. Kinchev's argument, however, is one that is reproduced by fans on forums as well. Despite the reports of recently increasingly presence of so-called "skiny" (skinheads) at Alisa concerts, of the forums reviewed it was

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assistance with translating Kinchev's verse.

<sup>51</sup> Nastya Rakhlina, "SOLNTSEVOROT" : ETO NE AL'BOM. ETO BOMBA," Alisa.net <http://www.alisa.ru/presa.php?action=2000&disk=press47>

<sup>52</sup> *Argumenty i Fakty*, "Press-konferentsiya, posvyaschennaya vykhodu al'boma 'SOLNTSEVOROT,'"

rare to find any views that were openly Nazi-sympathetic, and for the most part forum users are hostile towards ‘skinny.’<sup>53</sup> Instead many internet forum users have picked up on Kinchev’s explanation for the use of the swastika, and reproduce his argument, sometimes almost verbatim.

Another factor contributing to the Kinchev’s use of the symbol may have been publicity. Using provocative cover-art brought the album to the attention of the press, even if it did result in the main Radio outlet for Russian rock refusing to play it.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, using the swastika may have empowered Kinchev in the eyes of his fans. That is, by using a provocative symbol, and boldly deflecting journalists’ criticisms, Kinchev may have raised his status in his fans’ view, who may envy his defiant stance. In Chapter 3, I examine a fan forum discussion where Kinchev’s argument is reproduced by fans. Left facing swastikas also decorate the Army of Alisa’s official St. Petersburg chapter website.<sup>55</sup>

The cover of “Solstice” was not the only element which set the album apart from previous works. There were important thematic differences in the album’s lyrics, and new musical arrangements that placed the album closer to hard rock or heavy metal than “the Fool” (1997) or “Jazz”(1996). According to the lyric notes provided on Alisa’s webpage, the majority of material on Solstice was written in 1997 and 1998.<sup>56</sup> While “Solstice” is Alisa’s first album of the Putin era, it was conceived during and judging from its content

<sup>53</sup> see, “TRABLY! Kako j stala Legendarnaya Pitserskaya gruppa Alisa?” [http://www.k4s.ru/2\\_4-5.html](http://www.k4s.ru/2_4-5.html)(accessed May 20, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Peter Baker and Susan Glassman’s *Kremlin Rising* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books Inc, 2005), 78, discusses the controversy, perhaps a testament itself to the amount of media the cover alone generated.

<sup>55</sup> see the bottom of the homepage on the Army of Alisa official St. Petersburg website. <http://www.spb-army.narod.ru/news.htm>

<sup>56</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, *Solntsevorot*, 2000 CD and lyrics: <http://www.alisa.net/disk1/sun.htm#sun>

inspired by the tumultuous final years of the Yeltsin presidency and the 1998 economic crisis.<sup>57</sup> Thematically, many of its songs portray a Russia under siege by corrupt leaders and legions of sycophantic opportunists, who are destroying the country for their own personal gain. He sings on “Joy of Sorrow” “*the Cautious have unleashed flammable ideas, Sound the alarm, Cities are burning!*,” and concludes in the song’s final stanza:

*The unnoticeable have made the laws for themselves  
And the people are rushing  
Harness and collar  
And are leaving through the border*<sup>58</sup>

Such lyrics seem to reflect the period in which they were written as “the 1998 economic crises sent the ruble into free fall and foreign investors scrambling for the next plane to London,” according to one history of the period.<sup>59</sup> In other songs, Kinchev characterizes these various self-serving groups as “Pigs” and “Fleas,” a thematic device that becomes familiar in later albums, that is a poetic transmogrified representation of enemies as animals rather than humans. He sings in the song “Lord of the Fleas“:

*But the new ordered savior talks again about the holy way  
But where is the damn detonator, in order to close this way  
Who will dare to atone for the shame of my land?  
No one. And all the legions are trying to get into a higher position*

*And we are all silent and cannot understand  
As it happened, we were all taken aback  
We knew how to live life, and we were able to play it  
But now we are following the lord of the fleas.*<sup>60</sup>

The lyrics seem to argue that the leadership is surrounded by self-serving parasites who are shaming the land, and the country has been hoodwinked by master deceivers. Where did Kinchev’s new conspiratorial view on Russian politics come from? In an interview

<sup>57</sup> Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, “Radosti Pechal,” *Solntsevorot*, 2000 CD and lyrics: <http://www.alisa.net/disk1/sun.htm#sun>

<sup>59</sup> Baker and Glasser, 67.

<sup>60</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, “Povelitel' blokh,” *Solntsevorot*, 2000 CD and lyrics:

with the newspaper *Zavtra* in 1999, shortly before “Solstice” was released, Kinchev noted that he was a fan of the books of Metropolitan Ioann of St. Petersburg.<sup>61</sup> In his book

*Rulers and Victims*, Geoffrey Hosking has characterized Metropolitan Ioann’s views:

One party in the church, led by Metropolitan Ioann of St. Petersburg, combined geopolitical conceptions with anti-Semitism. Ioann drew a picture of Rus and Russia as a nation constantly under the threat from cunning and malicious foreigners. He quoted the words of Alexander III: “Russia has no friends. Everyone fears our immensity.” Russia had been able to survive only thanks to the staunchness of its Orthodox faith, the firmness of its autocratic leaders, and its readiness to sacrifice everything in defense of the homeland. The twentieth-century form of this threat Ioann saw as embodied in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.<sup>62</sup>

On reviewing the lyrics to “Solstice,” it seems apparent that many of Kinchev’s songs on the album may have been influenced by Ioann’s views. The theme of a cunning cabal of secret plotters exploiting Russia runs throughout “Solstice.”<sup>63</sup> Insofar as anti-Semitism, lines such as “Here is the King’s entourage, the proud band, Here are the parasites, trying to suck the blood” in another song off of “Solstice” may be reference to anti-Semitic epithets. Kinchev, is for the most part not openly anti-Semitic when interviewed in the press. He has, however, on occasion expressed some hostility towards the Jewish religion as opposed to Jews themselves, as in a 1999 *Zavtra* interview, shortly before *Solstice*’s release, in which he said “Judaism - is the main enemy of Orthodoxy and all holiness that there is on earth.”<sup>64</sup> At the same time, while “Solstice” may have some anti-Semitic or Judeophobic implications within its lyrics, Kinchev’s next “national-patriotic” album “Now is Later Than You Think” predominantly portrayed a different Other. With a few exceptions, anti-Semitism did not become a defining theme

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<http://www.alisa.net/disk1/sun.htm#sun>

<sup>61</sup> *Gazeta <Zavtra>* “Konstantin Kinchev: <My - pravoslavnye!>” N 26 (291), June-July, 1999 <http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/99/291/71.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

<sup>62</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 398.

<sup>63</sup> see “Star of the Pigs” and “Lord of the fleas,” also from “Solstice” (2000).

<http://www.alisa.net/disk1/sun.htm#sun>

<sup>64</sup> *Gazeta <Zavtra>* “Konstantin Kinchev: <My - pravoslavnye!>” N 26 (291), June-July, 1999

of Kinchev's later work.<sup>65</sup>

An important song from "Solstice" is "Orthodox!" because it is one of the first times that Kinchev directly combines a territorial claim with a religious identification. He sings, "*In the glory of **our** land, **We** are Orthodox!*" and in the final chorus Kinchev clarifies the exact space and place, "*In all the space of **Rus**, **We** are Orthodox!*" (emphasis mine) What should be focused on in this song, is not so much the "Orthodox," but the "We." Who is Kinchev referring to as "We?" Is it merely devout Orthodox believers, or is he singing on behalf of an ethnocultural Russian core and defining them on the basis of Orthodoxy. According to Hosking some 80% of Russians identify themselves as Orthodox on censuses, while a much smaller percentage attended services and were well informed of Orthodox beliefs.<sup>66</sup> What also becomes apparent in Kinchev's press interviews, however, is that for him Orthodoxy and Russian nationality are inextricably linked. This is not a necessarily new trend for Russian national thought, Gellner pointed out that in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* a character "defends his Slav status by reference to his Orthodox religion."<sup>67</sup> What differentiates Kinchev's use of Orthodoxy, however, is the emphasis. As Kinchev described in a press interview, "True nationalism- is based on religion."<sup>68</sup> That is, for Kinchev, "love of the motherland and patriotism," which is his definition of nationalism, is based in the Orthodox religion.<sup>69</sup> As will be seen in chapter 3. This conception, of 'nationalism' being based on religion is reproduced on fan forums as well.

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<http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/99/291/71.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

<sup>65</sup> One exception may be the song "Dirt" from "Now is Later than You Think"(2003),

<sup>66</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, 398.

<sup>67</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 72.

<sup>68</sup> Lider "Alisa" delitsya svoim mirovozzreniem dazhe s temi, kto ego ne prinimaet. Strana.RU - 6 oktyabrya 2003. <http://www.alisa.ru/presa.php?action=2003&disk=press170>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Alisa's next notable album in Kinchev's "national-patriotic" phase is 2003's "Now is Later Than You Think." The song "Sky of Slavs," which was originally the album's title, and a favorite among fans, exhibits some new themes and developments.<sup>70</sup>

On the chorus Kinchev sings:

*We are sharpened<sup>71</sup> by the semen of the hordes<sup>72</sup>  
 We are under the yoke of the Basurman<sup>73</sup>  
 But in our veins boils  
 The sky of Slavs  
 From the shores of Chudskih<sup>74</sup>  
 To the ice of Kolyma,  
 All of this is our land  
 All of this is us*

*Against the foreigner our chain armor is Russian speech  
 And from the forest up to the stars  
 The white men rise  
 Here on the native land  
 We will die<sup>75</sup>*

This is one of the first examples, where Kinchev references a new Other not present on "Solstice." On "Solstice" those who threaten the nation are represented as sycophantic conspiratorial opportunists, a secretive hidden enemy. On "Now Is Later Than You Think," a new group has emerged, a multifarious encroaching Asian horde that is threatening the Motherland. Kinchev's lyrics argue that although this horde may be encroaching on Slavic dominance that ultimately, "All of this is our land, "All of this is

<sup>70</sup> *Strana.RU* "Lider "Alisy" delitsya svoim mirovozzreniem dazhe s temi, kto ego ne prinimaet." October 6, 2003. <http://www.alisa.ru/pressa.php?action=2003&disk=press170> (accessed May 20, 2008)

<sup>71</sup> or grinded, worn down.

<sup>72</sup> referring to Tatars according to Misha Kozyrev of Nashe Radio in Baker and Glasser, 75, also Mongol-Tatar hordes of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. 1. Thomas Fitzsimmons, Peter Malof, and John C. Fiske, *USSR: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven, CT: HRAF Press, 1960), 3. <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=102071976>.

<sup>73</sup> *Basurman*, "mutilated from *Mussulman*, is an archaic and contemptuous designation for Mohammedans and in general for all who do not profess the Orthodox faith." S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, from the Earliest Times until the Present Day* trans. I. Friedlaender, vol. 1, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 35, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=14026912>.

<sup>74</sup> Lake bordering Estonia, also known as Lake Pepsei

<sup>75</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, "Nebo Slavyan," *Sejchas Pozdnee, Chem ty Dumaesh'* 2003 ZAO "Moroz

us,” that is the land is the land *of* and *for* Russian speakers with the “Sky of Slavs” in their veins. The sudden anxiety over ‘Slavic blood’ ‘foreigners’ and ‘hordes’ may be related to real trends in demography as well as immigration and internal migration in the Russian Federation in the 2000s. Dr. Paul Goble, has noted:

The fertility rate for Tatars living in Moscow is six children per woman...while the Chechen and Ingush communities are averaging 10 children per woman. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have been flocking to Russia in search of work.<sup>76</sup>

In addition, a report by the Rand Corporation has cited widespread anxiety over immigration of ‘non-ethnic’ Russians:

Immigration of non-Russian populations often stirs popular opposition and concern. More than half(56 percent) of all Russians see at least some “threat to security of Russia from people of other nationalities living in Russia.”<sup>77</sup>

The question becomes whether Kinchev’s fans share these anxieties, and if so whether these anxieties affect how they interpret Kinchev’s music. What should be noted in Kinchev’s lyrical representations is that while an Other is reified in the language of encroaching ‘hordes,’ ‘basurman,’ ‘foreigners,’ these terms are simultaneously imprecise. Kinchev never says the names of contemporary ethnic groups or categories, but uses historical allegory. In chapter 3, I examine whether historical allegory is interpreted by fans as referencing a vague ethnic Other. If so this may related to what Emil A. Pain has described as a particular form of xenophobia in the Russian Federation. He writes, “A particular form of xenophobia is ethnophobia—fears directed both against concrete ethnic groups and against those loosely grouped together as ethnic “others” (“Caucasians,”

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M'yuzik" lyrics: [http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d03\\_lyrics.htm#nebo](http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d03_lyrics.htm#nebo)

<sup>76</sup>Michael Mainville. "Muslim Birthrate Worries Russia; Majority Seen by Midcentury." *The Washington Times*, November 21, 2006, A01. via Questia. <http://questia.com>  
<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5018104576>

<sup>77</sup> Julie DaVanzo and Clifford A. Grammich, “Dire DemographicsPopulation Trends in the Russian Federation,” *Rand Monograph Report*. Rand Corporation 2001, 19.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1273/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1273/)

“southerners,” “foreigners”).<sup>78</sup> The effect of this ‘loose’ variety of xenophobia, when manifested in the ‘emotion-laden’ context of a song, may be that various ethnicities can be imagined in a fan’s interpretation of a song with potentially xenophobic themes. At the same time, fans that do not view the world through such categories may merely interpret Kinchev in a more figurative sense

Increasing anxiety about the demographics and immigration may be interpreted in Kinchev’s next album “Outcast” (2005) as well. Langmuir’s characterization of ‘xenophobic assertions’ may help to understand how xenophobia is incorporated into Kinchev’s music. Langmuir writes “The subject of a xenophobic assertion is not the outgroup; it is a felt social menace.”<sup>79</sup> Kinchev’s lyrical rhetoric seems to function in a similar way. The ‘Others’ themselves portrayed in his lyrics are often not as important as the social threat with which they are identified. Hence, for example, Muslims are potentially conflated with terrorism on the song “Beasts,” where Kinchev sings:

*Scum have multiplied in the Motherland  
Inhuman, in camouflage, without faces, without eyes  
With explosions they dictate their will to me  
Horrible terror, oppressing us  
Blood chokes the news reports  
How beasts mock, showing their teeth  
To kill children in the name of Allah  
This could only be total scum*

*Chorus: They are beasts! Not People!*<sup>80</sup>

Associated with the threat of terrorism, is an outgroup, characterized as “scum” and

<sup>78</sup> Emil A. Pain, “Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors,” *Nationalities Papers*, 35, no.5 (2007). 895 — 911, research databases via EBSCOHOST, <http://search.ebscohost.com/>

<sup>79</sup> Gavin L. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Anti-Semitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 330.

<sup>80</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, “Zveri,” *Izgoj*, 2005, Real Rekords INN 7704196095  
lyrics:[http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d05\\_lyrics.htm#zveri](http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d05_lyrics.htm#zveri)

“beasts.” However, Kinchev still maintains a certain level of ambiguity. He does not say that all Muslims “Kill children in the name of Allah.” At the same time, he may hint at demographic trends and associate them with this threat in the line, “Scum have *multiplied* in the Motherland.” The Other, is first of all associated with a threat, be it corruption, crime, or in this case terrorism. At the same time there is an additional threat which is that the Other are multiplying. How these two threats are brought together, illustrates the complex interplay between how xenophobia is incorporated into Kinchev’s style of lyrical rhetoric. The song “Black,”<sup>81</sup> which can be used as a slang word for people from the Caucasus, also from “Outcast,” (2005) contains potentially xenophobic assertions, as well as Kinchev’s definition of the Russia Federation as a nation-state specifically for ethnocultural Russians. During the first verse he sings:

*The gene pool is in decay,  
Biomass has been turned into electorate,  
He is always whispering: “You” (Tyi, informal), and always shouts “To Me”  
Confident up to the neck, in shit up to the eyes*

And then in the final verse:

*Everything is in decay, from region to region  
Crime is working actively  
Without variation, such things without alternatives,  
Here the word “russkii,”<sup>82</sup> is not politically correct enough,  
Here rossiiyanin, this is “clean” and “precise.”<sup>83</sup> (emphasis in original)*

Crime is associated with an abstract ‘Other’ that the song portrays. At the same time,

<sup>81</sup> In Russian, the word “Black” (Chyorny) can be used as a derogatory word for people from the Caucasus region.

<sup>82</sup> Russkii and Rossiyanin. Richard Sakwa explains the “two terms used to denote ‘Russian’ in the language: *Rossiiskoe* means ‘of Russia’, used adjectivally, giving rise to the noun *Rossiyanin*, a citizen of Russia of whatever ethnicity; whereas *Russkii*, the noun, denotes those who are ethnically Russian.” Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 212.

<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=108044816>.

<sup>83</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, “Zveri,” *Izgoj*, 2005, Real Rekords INN 7704196095  
lyrics: [http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d05\\_lyrics.htm#zveri](http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d05_lyrics.htm#zveri)

Kinchev never says directly who this Other is, it is up to fans to interpret. On reviewing forums, some fans interpreted the song this being about “Caucasians,” one fan argued it was about ‘negroes,’ and still another initially thought it was about Satan.<sup>84</sup> Kinchev includes both possible xenophobic assertions, by conflating crime with an outgroup, but also connects this to a definition of how he envisions citizenship in the Russian Federation should be defined. The last lines seem to imply that it is ironic that ‘rossiyanin’ is the politically correct term, when the term is used on account of those who are not russkii. That is, ethnocultural Russians, have to alter their way of speaking on behalf of a minority that is within the song’s rhetoric affiliated with crime and ‘decay.’ In Chapter 3 fan interpretations of these specific lines are analyzed.

In 2007 Kinchev released “Trait of the North,” which returned to Kinchev’s earlier themes of nature, self-reflection, and personal spirituality.<sup>85</sup> Whether Kinchev is currently reinventing himself or merely retreating temporarily from controversy is yet to be seen. At the same time, fan forum users continue to discuss the lyrics of “Outcast,” perhaps because of its controversial lyrics and political implications.

The thematic progression of Alisa’s albums from 1997-2007 is important for this study. On “The Fool”(1997) Kinchev began using vague references to the Motherland, God, and the soil in the song “Mama.” On “Solstice”(2000) these themes continued, but were accompanied by political criticisms with some possibly anti-Semitic implications. Considering that “Solstice” was being written and recorded during the period of the economic crises, with the sharp devaluation of the ruble in 1998, this sudden politicization of Kinchev’s music does not seem so surprising. One analysis of “Russian

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<sup>84</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045>(accessed May 23, 2008)

Anti-Semitism and the Scapegoating of Jews” suggests:

It is also possible that the economic crash of August 1998 increased the hostility of ordinary Russians toward the so-called “oligarchs” the seven or eight extremely wealthy and influential businessmen who made their vast fortunes from the shady privatization of formerly state-owned industries, most of whom are either Jewish or of partly Jewish origin.<sup>86</sup>

If Kinchev is a topical lyricist then the political and potentially anti-Semitic themes on “Solstice” are not surprising in the context of when it was released. What is less explainable is the jump to a more extremist ethnocultural nationalism on “Sky of Slavs”(2003), and the usage of non-ethnic Russians as a “loose” Other, albeit this is still mostly in the form of historical allegory in 2003. On “Outcast,” (2005) the threat of terrorism, an anxiety over demographics, and an association of crime with immigration may potentially be more directly associated with an Other. This may reflect general trends in Russia starting in the 2000s, if as one report asserts “Immigrants of non-Russian ethnicity, particularly those from the Caucasus, also have been viewed suspiciously in Moscow, with some Moscow journalists contributing to popular xenophobia and negative national stereotypes.”<sup>87</sup> If “popular xenophobia” was being actively promoted in certain sectors in the 2000s, than it may have been an appealing and culturally relevant theme musically. It should be noted that “Outcast” was not boycotted by Nashe Radio, as were “Solstice”(2000) and “Now is Later Than You Think”(2003).<sup>88</sup> Instead, “Outcast” was released on “Real Records,” Nashe Radio’s affiliated label, and Real Records has since

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<sup>85</sup> see official Alisa discography and lyric transcripts at <http://www.alisa.net/diskografiya.php>

<sup>86</sup> James L. Gibson, “Russian Anti-Semitism and the Scapegoating of Jews,” *British Journal of Political Science*, *Forthcoming*, November 21, 2005 <http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/government/faculty/mmh/bjps.pdf> (accessed May 20, 2008)

<sup>87</sup> Julie DaVanzo and Clifford A. Grammich, “Dire DemographicsPopulation Trends in the Russian Federation,” 19.

<sup>88</sup> “Alisa History” *Alisa.net* [http://www.alisa.net/istoriya\\_eng.php](http://www.alisa.net/istoriya_eng.php)

added “Now is Later Than you Think,” (2003) to its catalogue.<sup>89</sup> This could, however, be as much the result of increased market competition as the popular success of xenophobic themes. Nashe’s dominance in the Radio market has declined according to Peter Baker and Susan Glassman’s account, as other stations with a similar format (all-Russian language rock) have emerged in the last few years.<sup>90</sup> Last year, Nashe Radio began featuring Alisa on the station’s “Chart of a Dozen”(a hit parade program) and launched a new advertising campaign featuring Kinchev pictured below.<sup>91</sup>



Moscow Nevsky Prospect May 2008<sup>92</sup>

In a certain sense, Kinchev has been publicly rehabilitated after being ostracized

<sup>89</sup> Interaktiv *Realrec.ru* <http://www.realrec.ru/unreal.php>

<sup>90</sup> Peter Baker and Susan Glassman, 76.

<sup>91</sup> <http://nashe.ru/chart/> (accessed May 23, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Picture courtesy of Daria Ukhova

in the early 2000s on charges of nationalism. The question that remains is whether this rehabilitation has been the result of gaining popularity which the Radio stations and record companies could no longer hold back, or if norms have shifted and the his nationalistic and xenophobic themes have become more publicly accepted.

## Chapter 3. Fans Groups and Internet Forums

### 3.1 Interpreting Audiences

For me, Alisa, this a catalyst for developing as a person. I have been listening to Alisa for a reasonably long time. I was given wisdom, from the songs I have taken principles of life... Alisa has helped me to find pride in the land, that I am a Russian Orthodox person.<sup>93</sup>  
 --Posting on a fan forum from Alisa's website<sup>94</sup>

Having established in the previous chapter that many of Alisa's songs do contain lyrical themes, which could potentially be interpreted as xenophobic and nationalistic this chapter examines whether these themes are reflected in the discussions which fans have via the internet. Do fans interpret Kinchev's lyrics literally? When Kinchev references historical terms like "the Hordes" or "Basurman" do fans interpret these as referring to modern day ethnic categories/groups, or do they assess them as mere historical allegory? Do fans exhibit xenophobic attitudes in their interactions? Simply enjoying a song with xenophobic lyrical themes may not necessarily mean that fans who enjoy the song have strong xenophobic attitudes. Nationalistic lyrics which appear to be aimed at 'persuading the listener,' that the Russian Federation is a state '*of* and *for*' an exclusive 'core' of ethnocultural Russians, may not always succeed in 'persuading.'<sup>95</sup> If they do "persuade" the listener, or to use the vernacular 'strike a chord' with a listener, does it necessarily

<sup>93</sup> all user names have been left anonymous as in certain cases they may reveal biographical information about the authors. When discussing two or more forum users' comments in relation to one another, I have numbered them. All forum posts are from the official Army of Alisa fan forum at Alisa.net and the official Red-Black Hundred (St. Petersburg chapter) forum at <http://sotnya.by.ru/>

<sup>94</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. "Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI."  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13215&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%C7%C2%C>

mean that they accept the message completely, and if so, is this indicative of deeper held attitudes or beliefs?<sup>96</sup> This chapter will not attempt to answer all of these theoretical questions, but will examine how Alisa fans use a shared affinity for the band's music and shared interpretations of 'meaning' as a basis for the construction of social groups. By doing this, I hope to ascertain why nationalistic and xenophobic lyrical themes are appealing to certain fans, and how not only listening to Alisa's music, but partaking in an affiliated fan culture may help fans to construct a cognitive frame for understanding their environment, as well as deal with anxiety created by perceived threats. As sociologist Andrew Bennet has explained:

Both as a creative practice and as a form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings.<sup>97</sup>

This chapter will examine how Alisa fans interpret Kinchev's lyrics and use these interpretations both as a means to cognitively understand 'everyday surroundings,' but also use a shared affinity for the music as means to construct a social network. These social networks and groups, which exist both as real 'face-to-face' fan clubs, and simultaneously as internet web forums, may also help fans to make sense of not only their 'everyday' environment, but also more distant sociopolitical phenomena that are perceived as social threats. While this research does not examine what occurs when groups meet offline, I do look at instances where offline meetings are discussed and planned. In order to understand how a group of fans actually interpret the music itself, I look at fan forum discussions about two songs with potentially nationalistic and

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5%D0%C8&start=30 (accessed May 26, 2008)

<sup>95</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, 166;

<sup>96</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, 166; Rogers Brubaker, "In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism," 117.

xenophobic themes which were reviewed in chapter 2. Before turning to this, however, I examine the history and divisions of Alisa's fan base.

### **3.2 The Army of Alisa:**

According to its own literature, the "Army of Alisa" was called into existence by Konstantin Kinchev in 1991 while the album "Shabash" was being released.<sup>98</sup> Originally, being a member provided fans with a 20% discount on all concert tickets. The club also had its own newspaper "Shabash" and for a time a radio show.<sup>99</sup> This early heyday of the Army of Alisa ended after two years, apparently due to financial problems. The club fell into obscurity for a short time afterwards, and then was reestablished in 1996 when the first official Alisa website was established.<sup>100</sup>

In the 2000s most of the Army's activities moved onto the internet. Today, Alisa.net's Army of Alisa forum has 14,422 registered users.<sup>101</sup> Estimating the make up of Kinchev's fan base is difficult. Recently it has been noted that increasingly younger fans have been making up a large portion of the audience, but older fans also still attend concerts as well. Judging from the personal photos that some fans use as their avatars, it appears that the majority of users on the web community are in their mid to late teens and early twenties.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore while it appears that a majority of users are male, there are

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<sup>97</sup> Andy Bennet, "Music, Space and Place," in *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, ed. Andy Bennet, Sheila Whiteley and Stan Hawkins, 2 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> "Armii ISTORIYA," *Alisa.net*, [http://www.alisa.net/armiya\\_alisa.php](http://www.alisa.net/armiya_alisa.php) (accessed May 20, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> *Novaya Gazeta* "Malye narodtsy XXI veka «ARMIYA ALISA»: KRASNOE I CHERNOE Ryadom so starymi alisomanami stali poyavlyat'sya yunye fany, chasto s britymi golovami," February 12, 2007. <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/10/39.html> (accessed May 10, 2008)

<sup>100</sup> "Armii ISTORIYA," *Alisa.net*, [http://www.alisa.net/armiya\\_alisa.php](http://www.alisa.net/armiya_alisa.php) (accessed May 20, 2008).

<sup>101</sup> "Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa," <http://www.alisa.net/forum/>; this number includes two accounts I created to conduct research.

<sup>102</sup> *Novaya Gazeta* "Malye narodtsy XXI veka «ARMIYA ALISA»: KRASNOE I CHERNOE Ryadom so starymi alisomanami stali poyavlyat'sya yunye fany, chasto s britymi golovami,"

many female users who post regularly.

According to interview I conducted with a member of The Red-Black Hundred(a ‘national patriot’ splinter group of the Army), at least in St. Petersburg, the term “alisoman” has been following out of favor among younger fans.<sup>103</sup> This change in the nomenclature, may be more the result of a the generational change in Kinchev’s fan base, than a specific change in group ideals. It does not seem surprising that teenage and twenty-something Alisa fans would want to distinguish themselves from their older peers. My interviewee also indicated that a new term “Red-Black” has emerged as a moniker used by younger Alisa fans, although this term does not necessarily imply membership in the Red-Black Hundred group. In Recent years, the St. Petersburg Army of Alisa chapter has stopped having weekly meetings. This does not necessarily mean, though, that the Army of Alisa, no longer exists. However, it seems likely that as the web community has grown that the need for face-to-face meetings and the older organizational structure based around newspapers and radio shows has become less important.

### **Fan Forums 3.3:**

This section looks at how fans discuss and interpret songs on the Army of Alisa forum by analyzing the responses and interpretations of fan discussions centered around the songs “Sky of Slavs” and “Black.”<sup>104</sup> A number of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs are

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with Red-Black Hundred organizer. Interviews was conducted in confidentiality, and the name of interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement

<sup>104</sup> About the internet based forum research: While this kind of research obviously does not allow for the same kind of information as on the ground fieldwork would provide, it has its advantages as well. The anonymity of internet interaction allows the researcher the ability to observe fans opinions and sentiments without concerns that the researcher’s presence is interfering with the quality of the information. At the same time, opinions expressed on the internet should be handled carefully. As forums are public, fans may express certain attitudes and opinions differently than they would in private conversation. It should be noted, however, that these forums are not always merely a virtual world contained within themselves, but

exhibited on the fan discussion groups on the official Army of Alisa web forum. First, it should be noted now that Alisa is once again receiving radio airplay, the band likely has a sizable group of fans who could be classified as ‘casual listeners.’<sup>105</sup> It is doubtful that ‘casual listeners’ take the time to log onto Alisa’s page, set up an account, post on forums, create a profile, and probably do not identify themselves as an ‘alisoman,’ Army of Alisa member, Red-Black Hundred member, or ‘Red-Black.’ Due to the methodology being used here, only ‘hardcore’ fans can be assessed. Even as Alisa’s primary forum boasts a substantial 14,000 + users, it seems probable that the more involved a fan, the more often they would use the forums. Indeed, although a large number of individuals do register and partake in the forum discussions, there are some fans whose user names appear far more frequently than others. Furthermore, in the comparatively minuscule (some 103 registered users) Red-Black Hundred forum, many of the same user names appear on Alisa’s forum as well.<sup>106</sup> Meaning that fan divisions and categories are not isolated and exclusive, but rather are overlapping and shifting. The difference between the nature of the two forum groups analyzed here is important. Red-Black Hundred members for example do not discuss Red-Black Hundred organizing issues on Alisa’s official forum. To a large extent the context determines the content. It should also be noted that although many users identify their location as St. Petersburg or Moscow, that there are users from numerous other cities throughout the Russian Federation, as well as occasional users from Belarus, Ukraine, and Great Britain.

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are often used as facilitators for face-to-face social activity in the ‘real’ world. This is particularly notable in the forums of the “Red-Black Hundred,” where meetings, policies, and recruitment plans are discussed. Furthermore, complete anonymity is not always the norm, with some forum users using at least their real first name and personal pictures as their avatar.

<sup>105</sup> Alisa has recently been in rotation on Nash Radio’s “Chart of a Dozen” hit parade; *Khit-parad* “Chartova Dyuzhina” <http://nashe.ru/chart/>

<sup>106</sup> for example the Red-Black hundred member I interviewed had a noticeable presence on both the Red

### **3.3.1 Case 1. Internet Fan Forum Analysis- Alisa.net Song Forum: Sky of Slavs**

*We are sharpened by the semen of the hordes, We are under the yoke of the basurman, But in our veins boils, The sky of Slavs. From the shores of Chudskih, To the ice of Kolyma, All of this is our land, All of this is us. Against the foreigner our chain armor is Russian speech, And from the forest up to the stars, The white men rise, Here on the native land, We will die*<sup>107</sup>

How do fans on Alisa's official fan forum interpret a song like "Sky of Slavs?" Is Kinchev's historical allegory interpreted as representing present day ethnic categories or groups? In this section I examine the responses from three different discussions on the Army of Alisa's general forum from where the song is analyzed. In chapter 2, I pointed out some of the themes in this song and how they may be interpreted. In the following section it becomes apparent that while fans easily identify these themes, the interpretations they create are often more complex than my relatively straightforward reading of the lines.

First, there are typical responses about how the song makes fans feel, such as in a forum from April of 2008, "When I listen to it, a patriotic spirit rises within me"<sup>108</sup>, or another user notes, "I adore this song, as it is about us- the Slavs,"<sup>109</sup> such responses do not say much about how fans interpret a song's lyrics, but they do reveal the "emotional power" of ethnocultural nationalism as well as how national feeling can be "triggered through music popularly perceived as reflecting the nation's particular past or genius."<sup>110</sup> This may be an important appeal for many fans, the simple emotive power of a well

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lack Hundred forum and the Army of Alisa forum

<sup>107</sup> Konstantin Kinchev, "Nebo Slavyan," *Sejchas Pozdnee, Chem ty Dumaesh'* 2003 ZAO "Moroz M'yuzik" lyrics: [http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d03\\_lyrics.htm#nebo](http://www.alisa.net/disk1/d03_lyrics.htm#nebo)

<sup>108</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. "Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI." <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13921&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=0> (accessed May 23, 2008)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Walker Connor *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. (Princeton: Princeton University

delivered rock anthem that reminds them of a perceived group membership in an enduring and primordial Orthodox Slavic nation.

Still other fans dig deeper, interpreting a message rather than merely an emotional response. One user notes that “Nazis”(most probably referring to racist skinhead groups) may attribute their own meaning to “Sky of Slavs” another user replies:

...It says simply and without metaphors: “I am Russian!”(russkii) When people start to confuse their asses with their fingers- i.e. nationalism equals Nazism. But, these are largely two different things...<sup>111</sup>

A recurring theme in Alisa’s fan forums is extreme sensitivity to accusations of Nazism, and distinguishing between what they call nationalism(usually refers to love of the Motherland) and Nazism. This may be both because of a perception as Kinchev has stated that “Nazism is our national enemy,” but also because of hostility among some fans towards the recent growth of neo-Nazi groups in Russia.<sup>112</sup> In another discussion from May of 2008 where fans dissect the line “the white men rise,” these negative feelings towards such groups are expressed. The following argument exhibits negative feelings towards such groups, as well as how fans interpret Kinchev’s texts:

User 1: Maybe I understand it incorrectly, but the words “White men” I take as “White(Aryan) Races,” and this is neo-fascist terminology. Only, I still really like all of this song. Because the music is high quality, and the text is in general not bad.<sup>113</sup>

User 2: Nationalism is love for one’s own nation, it is good. Kinchev already said that he is a nationalist and supports the Black Hundred. And it is correct. White man sounds very beautiful, Russians are white

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Press, 1996), 42, 204.

<sup>111</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13921&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=0> (accessed May 23, 2008).

<sup>112</sup> Emil Pain, estimates that there are some 30,000 members of racist skinhead groups in the Russian Federation. see Emil A. Pain, “Xenophobia and Ethnopolitical Extremism in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Growth Factors,” *Nationalities Papers*, 35, no.5 (2007). 895 — 911, research databases via EBSCOHOST, <http://search.ebscohost.com/>

<sup>113</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15>(accessed May 23, 2008).

people.<sup>114</sup>

User 1 : White men sounds very beautiful, Russians are white people.” I agree. It sounds nice. Simply, skinheads also have appreciated this beauty, and also like any such phrases. And here I do not have completely pleasant associations. In my home Novosibirsk (I’m sure in other cities also) pro-fascist leaflets are stuck everywhere, which include the phrases “white men” “white honor” “white nation” and etc. Therefore, I do not consider “Sky of Slavs” as a simple national-patriotic song. Accordingly, this song opposes “white” Slavs to non-Slavic peoples (Tatar, Buryat, Dagestaniis and etc.) And this divides Russian citizens into two opposing sides, which are unlikely to understand each other better after listening to this song. In my view it is better to sing songs which portray a multi-national Russian(russissiki) people.<sup>115</sup>

User 2: It’s better to sing about one’s own people. The Tatar about his, Bashkirs about his, and the Russian about his. Russia is a MONO-national country, Russians are 85%.<sup>116</sup> (emphasis in original)

First, it should be noted that the forum users interpret the song’s historical allegory in contemporary terms. User 1. identifies the song’s possibly nationalistic implications, which were discussed in chapter 2., but rejects the song’s message on the grounds that it provokes tension between different ethnic groups. All the same, while rejecting the message, or a few of the song’s lines, overall the fan likes the song. User 2, also identifies the same themes, but rather than rejecting its ethnocultural nationalist claim, embraces it, and sees it as an affirmation of his own view that “Russia is a MONO-national country.” Underlying this argument are not different interpretations of the song’s message, but rather different interpretations of how a Russian ‘nation’ should be defined. User 2, interprets the song as a confirming the Russian Federation as a nation-state *of* and *for* an 85% ‘core’ of ethnocultural ‘white’ Slavic Russians. Whereas, User 1 dislikes the song’s message because it challenges a multiethnic conception of Russian citizenship. What is surprising, however, is that even with this challenging message, that

<sup>114</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15&sid=32d803edf05d1682621fb367b8d45409>(accessed May 23, 2008)

<sup>115</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15>(accessed May 23, 2008).

<sup>116</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15>

user 1. still likes the song.

### **3.3.2 Case 2. Internet Fan Forum Analysis- Alisa.net Song Forum: “Black”**

In an analysis of a fan discussion about the song “Black” the underlying conflict over a definition of the Russian nation, as well as xenophobic assertions about non-ethnocultural Russians drive the argument. The lines “*Crime is working actively Without variation, such things without alternatives, Here the word “russkii,” is not politically correct enough, Here rossiyanin, this is “clean” and “precise,”*” yield five pages of forum discussion. In chapter 2., I interpreted these lines as being potentially xenophobic by conflating an Other with crime and also possibly nationalistic because of its mocking the term rossiyanin. In a discussion from September of 2006, one fan writes,

“...This song is about churbanakh<sup>117</sup>, that is blacks, which call themselves “citizens of Russia,” not being Russian(russkii)”<sup>118</sup> Another user thinks the song is about “negroes.” Another user writes, “I think that Russia is a multi-national state, I am alarmed by these lines.....”<sup>119</sup> This prompts another user of the nation-state persuasion to respond with the familiar claim “Russia -is MONOnational country: more than 80 percent are Russians.”<sup>120</sup> Another user contributes an idea of common ancestry “Rossiyanin this is a political word. But, russkii, this should be the blood.”<sup>121</sup> One user offers a completely

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1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=30 (accessed May 23, 2008).

<sup>117</sup> slang for dark skinned ‘non-ethnic’ Russian

<sup>118</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045> (accessed May 20, 2008)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=15> (accessed May 20, 2008).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

different explanation of the song as a whole, while conceding the possibility that the lines may have certain implications:

...Judging from the song as a whole, it's possible to conclude that it speaks about Satan and how he destroys people. But these lines are not completely clear. It seems to me that it should be considered that in our country there are many different peoples of other nationalities with Russian citizenship...<sup>122</sup>

Unlike the discussion of "Sky of Slavs," there is less consensus in this case of the meaning of the lines. Here Kinchev's lyrics may be deliberately ambiguous, and the 'message' or content for a large part seems to be in ear of the listener here. That is fans with whom xenophobic assertions tend to resonate, may tend to understand Kinchev's texts as being about some ethnic Other. These also seem to be mostly those fans whom stress a definition of the Russian Federation as a "mono-national" state. Whereas fans whom adhere to a multiethnic definition of the Russian Federation, may tend to favor more figurative readings. At the same time, the fans whom argue for a multi-ethnic definition of Russian national identity, and consider Russia as "a multi-national country" seem to be well aware of the appeal that certain songs have for fans with xenophobic attitudes and nationalist conceptions of statehood.

In the song discussion sections of the Army of Alisa forum, fans tend to be most reserved in expressing their views. Elsewhere in the Army of Alisa's the forum, users are less reserved. This is especially noticeable in the "Political" section, where news and current events are discussed. In these discussions, it becomes easier to judge whether fans exhibit xenophobic attitudes. The same user whom argued for example, when analyzing "Sky of Slavs" that "Russia is a MONO-national country 85% Russian," asserts in a

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<sup>122</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. "Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI." <http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045> (accessed May 20, 2008).

discussion that largely focuses on immigration, crime, and various ethnic Others, “If one familiarizes himself with Chechen culture, it becomes understood, that its most important component is raiding (or robbery).”<sup>123</sup> Essentialist views of immigrants, especially ones associating them with crime are common:

Who usually leaves their own country to find a better life? Adventurers, criminals... Only the unintelligent person could conclude that the availability of migrants does not worsen the criminal situation in the country. Suitcase, train station, Caucasian...<sup>124</sup>

This user at first creates an abstract category of migrants whom are associated with crime, but then supplies an ethnic Other in the end. Another user with a penchant for mathematics, argues for a large scale expulsion of “migrants:”

...We assume that, 50% of criminals in the territory of Russia are Russians(russkii) and 50% are “migrants,” i.e. they make 100% together. So then, simple arithmetic, the absence of “migrants” in the territory leads to then, that the total number of crimes committed is reduced 50%, instead of 100%...<sup>125</sup>

Nevertheless, in this user’s argument there is an implicit assumption that the Russian Federation is specifically *for* ethnocultural Russians(russkii), otherwise one could reason that eliminating the ethnocultural Russians would just as effectively alleviate criminal activity. The implication, though, that ethnocultural Russians would rather have exclusively ethnocultural Russian criminals is a particularly odd example of ethnocultural nationalism.

An interesting aspect about these discussions is that the users do not differentiate between ‘immigrants’ from other countries and internal migrants who hold Russian

<sup>123</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> POLITIKA<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13813&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C0%D6%C8%CE%CD%C0%CB%C8%D1%D2&start=15> (accessed May 10, 2008).

<sup>124</sup> Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> POLITIKA<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13813&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C0%D6%C8%CE%CD%C0%CB%C8%D1%D2&start=0> (accessed May 10, 2008).

citizenship. While the previous statements are seemingly classic examples of xenophobic assertions, conflating a social threat, crime, with an essentialised although loose and vague Outgroup(s), migrants, Chechens, Caucasians, it could be questioned whether these attitudes and views are related to a shared affinity for Alisa and interpretation of Kinchev's lyric texts. What should be considered, however, is the context in which the statements are made. The users are discussing these issues on a forum that is primarily designed as a social network for fans of a music group. A forum can be defined as "an Internet discussion group for participants with common interests," but another definition is a "a medium in which the public may debate an issue or express opinions, e.g. a magazine or newspaper."<sup>126</sup> Fans *debate* issues, and as such, a certain tone, a certain context is set, and to a certain degree a common consensus may be reached. Frequent users of Alisa forums, are not merely members of a fan group, but are part of a fan culture, a fluid system of signs, codes, and symbols, through which fans communicate. This system seems to have its own norms as well. Although not all forum users argue for the expulsion of "migrants," when these views are expressed they are seldom criticized.

### **3.4 The Red-Black Hundred:**

The Red-Black Hundred is an "Army of Alisa" splinter group founded in 2002, which specifically caters to the "national-patriotic" fans of Alisa. According to its literature, the group is not named after the Russian anti-Semitic movements of the 1900s "The-Black Hundreds" which have been described by some as "the forerunner of modern

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>126</sup> Microsoft works dictionary.

Russian fascism,”<sup>127</sup> but rather a clandestine secret society of patriots with roots in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Red and Black are also Alisa’s official colors and typically used in the band’s iconography, hence the group’s name. The online group is relatively small with only 103 registered forum users, although it has chapters in both St. Petersburg and Moscow which communicate with one another. The group describes itself on its official webpage:

The KCHS (Red-Black Hundred) is an Orthodox National-Patriotic organization supporting various activities of national revival. We see the future of Russia in the three principles of Uvarov: “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality/National Spirit.”<sup>128</sup> The KCHS unites admirers of the group Alisa and the contemporary works of Konstantin Kinchev, who share the views of its mentor and are Orthodox national-patriots.

Our Goal- A Great Holy Rus! We are Together!<sup>129</sup>

Glory to Russia!<sup>130</sup>

According to an interview I conducted with a Red-Black Hundred member, Konstantin Kinchev called for creation of the group after a dispute with leader of the Army of Alisa St. Petersburg chapter over unknown reasons. It should be noted, though, that despite the Red-Black Hundred’s alleged ‘official’ (recognized by Kinchev) status, Alisa’s official webpage does not provide any mention of the Red-Black Hundred or links to its webpage. That is, if Kinchev supports the group, he does not seem to actively

<sup>127</sup> Laurent Murawiec, and Clifford C. Gaddy, "The Higher Police: Vladimir Putin and His Predecessors," *The National Interest*, Spring 2002, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5000742758>.

<sup>128</sup> 19th century Deputy Minister of Education under Nicholas I. see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, 201. <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=26344660>; Nationality/National Spirit is an approximate translation of the word *narodnost* – “The term *narodnost* is one of the most elusive in the Russian language. Its meanings and possible translations range from nationalism, nationality, nationhood, and national identity, through folkways, folksiness, and folklorism, to populism, popularity...”; Maureen Perrie, "Narodnost: Notions of National Identity," in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940* ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=59532309>.

<sup>129</sup> “We are Together” is a classic Alisa song from the album *Energy* (1985).

<sup>130</sup> “KCHS. Kto my?” *Krasno-Chernaya Sotnya* official site. <http://www.k4s.ru/main.html> (accessed May 20, 2008)

promote it. At the same time, the music video for “Sky of Slavs”(2003) features a close-up of the Red-Black Hundred flag briefly, and the member I interviewed noted that Kinchev displays their banners on the stage during concerts as well. While Kinchev seems to tacitly avoid publicly appearing to be too close to the group, its members may perceive themselves as having a special status among Alisa fans, as Kinchev does occasionally give them some form of recognition.

While Red-Black Hundred members may see their own group as an elite core of ‘national-patriotic’ fans, Kinchev may also have started the group as a way to isolate more radical fans from his general fan base. The values which the Red-Black Hundred seeks to promote, according to its literature “Orthodoxy, Nationality, Autocracy” are not shared by all users on Alisa’s general “Army of Alisa” fan forum. It should also be noted that although the Red-Black Hundred member I communicated with noted that they still attend weekly meetings, their web forum has been less active in recent months.

Although the Red-Black Hundred is technically an organization based around Alisa, there is actually very little discussion of the band’s music on their forum pages. Instead, most of the discussions are based around how to effectively organize their group and how to recruit new members at Alisa concerts. One forum discussion from January 2006, for example, consists of a member posting the text for a planned pamphlet to be handed out at concerts and other members commenting on the text of the manuscript.<sup>131</sup> In another forum from October of 2006, users discuss what relation the Red-Black Hundred should have with so-called ‘skinny’ (skinhead groups).<sup>132</sup> Ultimately reaching a

<sup>131</sup> Forum » Delovoj razdel » Tekst propagandistskoj listovki official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-3-0-00000006-000-0-0-1140592161> (accessed May 22, 2008)

<sup>132</sup> Forum » Obschij forum » CHto delat,' official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0-00000006-000-0-0-1184066209> (accessed May 22, 2008)

consensus that, although the Red-Black Hundred has its differences with neo-fascist groups, there should be more cooperation. They also propose joint action with the DPNI (the Movement Against Illegal Immigration).<sup>133</sup> It is hard to tell, practically, what the Red-Black Hundred actually does aside from handing out pamphlets and often traveling great distances from city to city following Alisa's tour. The member I interviewed informed me that his activities consisted mostly of educating others about 'patriotism and love of the country.' However, the group's intentions become clearer in some forum discussions. In one discussion for example, users make plans to find someone with a legal background in order to "counteract *dealers from the south* residing illegally in the Moscow area. It is possible to collect together some materials about infringements of rules of commerce and rules of residing."<sup>134</sup> Whether the Red-Black Hundred is actually a viable functioning anti-immigrant political action network is besides the point. What is important for this study, is the fact that the group, which is organized around a program of "Orthodoxy, Nationality, Autocracy," originates from a shared affinity for the band Alisa. The group, despite its lofty ambitions, is after all, an offshoot of an Alisa fan club.

The Red-Black Hundred members on web forums seem to in general seem to take Kinchev's lyrics as a call to action. With fans often posting slogans like "Healthy Russian nationalism will save Russia from the Basurman!" which seem to be directly pulled from the lyrics of "Sky of Slavs."<sup>135</sup> There are no song analysis pages on the Red-Black Hundred's forum. There are no discussions of interpreting what Kinchev's message is. When Kinchev's music is mentioned, like in the quote above, it is in the form of slogan.

<sup>133</sup> The Movement Against Illegal Immigration. see <http://www.dpni.org/>

<sup>134</sup> Forum » Obschij forum » CHto delat,' official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0-00000006-000-0-0-1184066209> (accessed May 22, 2008)

<sup>135</sup> Forum » Obschij forum » Opasnost' natsionalizma, official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0->

The Red-Black Hundred seem to closely follow Kinchev's views as portrayed in press conferences. Mimicking both his definition of 'nationalism,' (love of the country through a devotion to Orthodox Christianity) a hypersensitivity about the difference between nationalism and Nazism, and the appropriation of the Swastika as an Orthodox symbol. The following forum discussion from September of 2006 exhibits how the Red-Black Hundred reproduces Kinchev's arguments:

User 1 ....why are there so many swastika's on this site?<sup>136</sup>

User 2 ....The swastika - is not a symbol of fascism! It is the mark of the Solstice....It is in Orthodoxy, naturally... And this symbol was also used in Buddhism - from where it was "borrowed" by the gay corporal<sup>137</sup>

User 3 Swastika or no swatika... The point is not in the symbols. If you would like to consider yourself a Russian nationalist, it's necessary to always remember that you should be a Christian.(!) Through true Orthodoxy.<sup>138</sup>

User 4 accurately reproduces Kinchev's own definition of Orthodoxy based nationalism, while user 3 reproduces Kinchev's argument for using the Swastika on the cover "Solstice." Red-black Hundred forum users seem to be close followers not only of Kinchev's music, but also of his public press appearances and statements.

As noted, while this group is an interesting case of how fan cultures are constructed around interpretations of musical messages, the lack of music analysis on their forum pages makes it difficult to understand directly how these fan's interpret Kinchev's texts. However, judging from their hostility towards migrant and immigrant groups, and the policies they plan, and the fact that in their mission statement the group declares it is based around Kinchev's music and philosophy, it seems that indirectly, it is

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00000036-000-0-0-1183846851 (accessed May 22, 2008)

<sup>136</sup>Forum » Obschij forum » Opasnost' natsionalizma, official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0-00000036-000-0-0-1183846851> (accessed May 22, 2008)

<sup>137</sup>refers to Adolf Hitler. See Lothar Machtan *The Hidden Hitler* (New York: Perseus Press, 2001).

<sup>138</sup> Forum » Obschij forum » Opasnost' natsionalizma, official KCHS forum <http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0->

likely that as a group they favor a fairly straightforward reading of xenophobic and nationalistic themes. The lack of music discussion on their page is not so surprising, after all, if most members have a shared interpretation there would be little to discuss. Furthermore, as some of these members do maintain profiles on the Army of Alisa forum, it may be that when these fans want to analyze a song's lyrics they turn to that site instead, where there is an opportunity to debate their views with others who do not share them.

## **Conclusion**

When I began this project, I set out wanting to understand why nationalist and xenophobic themes resonated among a particular audience of Russian rock fans. My hypothesis was that Alisa's music and an affiliated fan culture served as a means through which fans could understand their environment and make sense of perceived threats.

Before turning to whether this hypothesis was validated or not, assumptions within my research question should be considered, as there were some unforeseen problems. The question itself has certain faults. For one thing, it implies, that the fan base has a unified interpretation of the music. What was found is that while fans may identify certain themes and relate to them, interpretations do sometimes differ between fans. It also may overstate the role that these themes play in the music's appeal. Kinchev incorporates a number of different themes into each album, and there are likely fans who are attracted to other themes which were not covered here.

Conversely, I was surprised by the uniformity of interpretation in the places where it did occur. What was surprising, although it now seems obvious, was that fans could anticipate how other fans with different attitudes and political views would interpret a song and how this would in turn affect their views. This was exhibited by two different users in two different discussions about "Sky of Slavs" (Chapter 3.3.2) where it was questioned whether the song had implications that "Nazis" or "skinheads" would appreciate. When I began research, I had an assumption that interpretations would largely

be within the ear of who was doing the listening, and that fans with xenophobic attitudes and nationalistic beliefs would project these factors onto their interpretations. While this may be the case in examples where Kinchev's lyrics are more coded and ambiguous, even in the historical allegory of "Sky of Slavs" users tended to recognize that the song contained a certain nationalistic message and possible xenophobic implications. The social nature of forums may also be affecting this as well, since fans' interpretations are likely to be affected by reading other fans' interpretations.

Xenophobic assertions, which conflate ethnic Others with social threats, are certainly abundant on the Alisa forums. As are ethnocultural nationalist arguments which assert that the Russian Federation is a "mono-national" country, and imply that it is the state primarily *for* ethnocultural Russians. At the same time, the argument that the Russian Federation is a multi-national country appears as well. It cannot be concluded whether xenophobia or nationalism is essential to the band's appeal, as there are also fans who treat these phenomena negatively, but like the band nevertheless. My expectation was that individuals who believed that the Russian Federation was a 'multiethnic' or 'multinational' country, would be so appalled by such xenophobic expressions and themes that they would completely reject the band and would not interact within its fan culture. This was not the case in certain instances where it was shown that fans will reject even individual lines within a song, but nevertheless like the song as a totality on some other criteria(see Chapter 3.31). This may be indicative of broader social norms. If xenophobic assertions and anti-immigrant language are more or less tolerated by individuals who do not have such attitudes, it may mean that hostility towards Others, especially so-called 'migrants' is an accepted form of expression, at least within Alisa's

fan culture.

Insofar as fans using the music as a way to understand social threats, clear cut connections were not exhibited. What was exhibited, though, was that fans engage in forum discussions with other fans where social threats, in the case studied migration and crime, are discussed and made sense of among an internet community. Being part of Alisa's fan base, allows fans to enter into a social world that may help them to understand threats and ease anxiety about them. Adorno, characterized listening to music as a socialization ritual, arguing that "the listener who remembers a hit song will turn into the song's ideal subject, into the person for whom the song ideally speaks. At the same time, as one of many who identify with that fictitious subject, that musical I, he will feel his isolation ease as he himself feels integrated into the community of "fans."<sup>139</sup> Music may have another function too, though, not just simulating a feeling of socialization, but also facilitating actual socialization between individuals. Alisa forum users are most likely originally drawn to the fan forums out an affinity for the band's music. However, once there, an electronic social world is developed. In the case of the Red-Black Hundred, an affinity for the music is translated into an ideology, and a social community is developed that exists beyond the internet. These musically facilitated communities do seem to serve as outlets for fans to cognitively make sense of their surroundings and perceived threats.

What was validated was that xenophobic assertions and ethnocultural nationalist conceptions are present among Alisa's fan base. Some fans do often identify these themes in their interpretations of Alisa's music, but not all fans all of the time. Furthermore, at least in one example, it was shown that a fan whom interpreted a nationalist message within a song analysis that the Russia Federation was a 'mono-national' country, also

exhibited xenophobic attitudes in another discussion (see Chapter 3.3.2). To determine why these nationalistic and xenophobic themes are specifically appealing to certain fans and not to others, however, would probably require biographical and psychological analysis of individual fans, which lies outside of the scope of this research.

In 2005, a publication by the SOVA center argued that Russian nationalist ideas were increasingly becoming present in mainstream politics and that “a range of ideas and individuals previously considered extremist and relegated to the margins of public life...have now been incorporated into the mainstream.”<sup>140</sup> The question is whether a similar trend has occurred in the cultural sphere, and whether Kinchev’s case is indicative of such a trend. As noted, two of Kinchev’s albums were boycotted by the Nashe radio station in the early 2000s on charges of ‘nationalism.’<sup>141</sup> In 2005, “Outcast”(which contains the song “Black”) was released by an affiliate of the same company that had put the boycott in place, and Nashe now features Kinchev in their advertisements. While Kinchev’s popularity has not skyrocketed, (in most cities he has been playing the same sized venues since the early 2000s), in this year in Moscow at least, he has been playing to larger audiences with dates booked at the Olympic Stadium, rather than in a smaller club as in previous years.<sup>142</sup> However, as not all Alisa fans are nationalistic or xenophobic, and these are not the only themes in his music, a correlation between a slight rise in Kinchev’s popularity and political nationalism entering the mainstream, may be spurious. What has changed, however, is that Kinchev is no longer being ostracized by

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<sup>139</sup> Adorno, 27.

<sup>140</sup> SD Shenfield, “The Price of Hatred: Nationalism in Russia and Resistance to Racist crimes,” *the Russian Review*, vol.67, no.1, pp.167-168, 2008. research databases via EBSCOHOST, <http://search.ebscohost.com/>

<sup>141</sup> “Alisa History” *Alisa.net* [http://www.alisa.net/istoriya\\_eng.php](http://www.alisa.net/istoriya_eng.php); Peter Baker and Susan Glassman, 76.

<sup>142</sup> *Alisa.net* “Information.” > concerts, <http://www.alisa.net/informaciya.php#concert> (date accessed May25,2008)

one of the major Russian rock music promoters, and this may reflect that nationalistic and xenophobic lyrical themes are presently more accepted, or at least overlooked, than when “Solstice”(2000) and “Now is Later Than You Think”(2003) were released.

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- Forum » Obschij forum » Opasnost' natsionalizma, (Danger of nationalism) official KCHS forum  
<http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0-00000036-000-0-0-1183846851>
- Forum » Obschij forum » CHto delat,' (What to Do) official KCHS forum  
<http://sotnya.fastbb.ru/?1-1-0-00000006-000-0-0-1184066209>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.”  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=15>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.”  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7045>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) PESNI.”(Songs)  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13215&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%C7%C2%C5%D0%C8&start=30>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.”  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15&sid=32d803edf05d1682621fb367b8d45409>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.”  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=15>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.”  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14172&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C5%C1%CE+%D1%CB%C0%C2%DF%CD&start=30>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> PESNI.” (Songs)  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13921&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=0>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> POLITIKA (Politics)  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13813&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C0%D6%C8%CE%CD%C0%CB%C8%D1%D2&start=15>
- Forum ofitsial'nogo sajta gr. Alisa. (Forum official site of the group Alisa) “Spisok forumov [www.alisa.net](http://www.alisa.net) -> POLITIKA (Politics)  
<http://www.alisa.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13813&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight=%CD%C0%D6%C8%CE%CD%C0%CB%C8%D1%D2&start=0>
- KCHS. Kto my?” *Krasno-Chernaya Sotnya* (KCHS. Who are we? Red-Black Hundred)official site. <http://www.k4s.ru/main.html>

### Supplementary Materials: Audio CD

1. Experimenter *Energy* (1985)
2. Orthodox! *Solstice* (2000)
3. Sky of Slavs *Now is Later Than You Think* (2003)
4. Beasts *Outcast* (2005)
5. Black *Outcast* (2005)