

Music vs. Politics: the Image of Russia in the Songs by British Pop Singers of the 1960s and 2010s

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Abstract—The article deals with three most famous songs by British performers about Russia: 1) “Back in the USSR” by the Beatles (1968); 2) “Russians” by Sting (1985) and “Party like a Russian” by Robbie Williams (2016). The author investigates how the image of Russia in Western popular music has been transformed in a historical perspective. Each song is analyzed in terms of social context of its appearance, musical means of its expression and visual images used. The work also traces the reaction to these songs in Russian media and popular culture. The author concludes that from the deliberately fictional image of another country (“Back in the USSR”) through the open voicing of the problem of the Cold War (“Russians”), the song discourse comes to a total irony over certain representatives of the nation (“Party like a Russian”).

Keywords—*intercultural dialogue; popular music; song; Soviet Union; West; Cold War; The Beatles; Sting; Robbie Williams; “Back in the USSR”; “Russians”; “Party like a Russian”*

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of interaction between popular music and politics has repeatedly become a subject of scientific research in the West. There are two main directions in this topic. The first is related to the study of popular music as a powerful (counter) cultural force, which significantly influences and sometimes determines global political processes [1]. The other direction, on the contrary, analyzes how the global political situation sets trends within the music industry [2] 2. In particular, how different directions of global popular music are absorbed on the local ground and form the national specificity of certain music styles [3], [4], [5]. In this study, we will proceed from the problem of interaction between global and local, but consider it from the opposite perspective, namely: what is the image of a particular country (Russia) from the position of the trendsetters in the world of popular music?

Despite the fact that in the history of British popular music there are more than a dozen songs directly or indirectly related to Russia [6], we will focus on only three of them. The selection of songs was based upon, firstly, the popularity of the performers and songs and, secondly, on the chronological principle, which made it possible to trace the transformation of the image of a particular country in a

certain historical perspective. The following songs have been analyzed: 1) “Back in the USSR” by the Beatles (1968), 2) “Russians” by Sting (1985) and “Party like a Russian” by Robbie Williams (2016).

A few words about the research algorithm. It will be divided into two large aspects. The first aspect will analyze the song itself on the basis of three components: social context of its appearance, musical means of its expression and visual images used (if any). Social context is determined not only by political issues, but also by the personality of the character on whose behalf the song is performed. In terms of musical means, it will be interesting to trace the presence of national motifs, allusions, quotes – how they relate to Russian music and what kind of image of the country they form. From the same point of view – national motifs and peculiarities of the presentation of Russia – it is worth considering visual images as well.

The second essential aspect that will determine the course of our research is the reaction of the audience, primarily the Russian audience, to this or that song. Two levels should be distinguished in this respect: authoritative discourse¹ (reaction to a song in the official media) and everyday practice (the nature of the song circulation in local popular culture). It should be noted that a “feedback” aspect will be considered with a different degree of detail depending on the song, which is determined by both the availability of historical evidence and the level of resonance of the song itself.

II. THE BEATLES “BACK IN THE USSR”: ABOUT RUSSIANS IN THE AMERICAN STYLE

“Back in the USSR” opens “The White Album” (1968), one of the most controversial albums in the Beatles’ discography. According to Jeffrey Roessner, the innovation of the album for the Beatles themselves and for the history of rock music was the fact that the band’s social and political protest was expressed with postmodern irony and quotations. “Rather than play music for its initial subversive value, the Beatles made ironic reference to earlier musical styles, thus both distancing themselves from the past and reinscribing those styles into a new historical moment with new meaning.

¹ Alexei Yurchak’s term [7].

They gave the music specific political and cultural relevance for their times” [8].

“Back in the USSR” accumulates a large number of references to patriotic stereotypes, musical genres, songs and characters of not Soviet, but ... of American popular culture. The Beatles' researchers highlight the following sources of quotations. Firstly, Walter Everett points to the chauvinistic “I'm backing Britain” campaign, which the United Kingdom conducted in January 1968 in hopes of raising funds to put toward the national debt [9]. According to Mike Lava, the song's original refrain sounded extremely provocative – “I'm backing USSR” [10]. Secondly, the most obvious source of quotations is Chuck Berry's “Back in USA” (1959).

In addition to the very similar sounding name that McCartney wittily uses to play with the character's point of destination, Chuck Berry's song “provides the Beatles with material in both a litany of place-names and an opening about an international return flight” [11]. Thirdly, while continuing to draw toponymical parallels, McCartney almost literally reproduces the title of Ray Charles' song “Georgia on My Mind”. However, he uses the similarity in pronunciation between the U.S. state and the Soviet republic to confess his love for Georgian girls (“The Georgians always on my mind”).

Fourthly, “Back in the USSR” chooses the works of “The Beach Boys” band, the Beatles’ friends and competitors, as a target for quotation and parody. The passionate nature of the character of one of the Beatles' songs and his admiration for the gentle sex refers to the idea of “California Girls” hit, released by “The Beach Boys” in 1965. At the level of music language, according to Ian Marshall, “The Beach Boy harmonies of “Back in the U.S.S.R.” bring a quintessentially American sound into dialogue with a worldview and political system that is usually deemed counter to all that is American.” [12]. Building on that idea, the researcher comes to an important conclusion that “the celebration of national landscapes (“Show me round your snow-peaked mountains way down south”), the rural life (“Take me to your daddy’s farm”), traditional folkways (“Let me hear your balalaikas ringing out”), and womanly resources (“That Georgia’s always on my mind” <...>) — all these could be right out of an all-American songbook. It’s a way of saying that there’s a lot of the United States in the U.S.S.R. (“Back in the U.S., back in the U.S., back in the U.S.S.R.”) and of suggesting that there should be more dialogue between the two countries.” [13].

Thus, the Beatles’ totally ironic and full of quotations song, which appeared during the Cold War, took on an important peacekeeping mission. It showed how clichéd and absurd the ideas of the warring countries about each other were, and at the same time admitted its own cliché and absurdity. In other words, by avoiding any political pathos, without striving to manifest anything, it definitely “questions a firm sense of identity predicated on national pride” [14].

With regard to art language, “Back in the USSR” is a unique example, when using the means of popular art of one country (North America), a panorama of life of another state, completely opposite in its political attitudes (the Soviet

Union), is drawn. All the references to the Soviet Union in the song are extremely formal, limited to mentioning balalaika and three geographical names (Moscow, Ukraine and Georgia). The author consciously builds the original basis of the song – both musical and mental – on the templates of American popular culture. It is thanks to this virtuoso technique that McCartney manages to raise a question that undermines the entire political situation at the time: what do we actually know about the hostile superpower, the Soviet Union?

In this respect, the image of the character on whose behalf the song is performed is extremely ambivalent. He returns from Miami to the USSR, looking forward to meeting not so much his native country as charming Soviet girls. It is important to note that in his mind he has an image of not only one beloved girl, but a group of beautiful women with elements of national traditions (Muscovites, Ukrainians, Georgians). In one of the interviews Paul McCartney admitted that he wrote this song on behalf of the Soviet spy who was returning home to the USSR after a long mission in the United States [15]. In fact, we are dealing with the image of James Bond, another legendary hero of Western popular culture. It is no coincidence that five years before the Beatles’ hit was written, a series of Bond films called “From Russia with Love” (1963, dir. T. Yang) was released, with a Russian spy woman playing the role of James Bond's girlfriend. Thus, in addition to the numerous reminiscences from American culture present in “Back in the USSR”, another one is added – the one with an obvious political undertone, and at the same time presented again in an extremely ironic way.

It must be admitted that along with the song itself, the reaction to it in the Soviet Union became an equally unique precedent. Whereas in the early 1960s the vast majority of references to the Beatles in the Soviet press were clearly negative, “Back in the USSR” became a turning point, when the songs of the British band began to circulate in the official Soviet media. They were broadcast on the radio, released on gramophone records and published in music collections. According to Vladimir Bokarev and Yuri Mitrofanov, “Beatles' rock 'n' roll, dedicated to the USSR, was seen by Soviet propaganda as a very unexpected and timely “gift” in view of the shaken reputation of the Country of the Soviets in the international arena after the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia” [16]. According to research data, in 1969 “Back in the USSR” was broadcast on the all-Union radio, performed by “Singing Guitars” pop band and amateur beat bands, and in 1970 three publications of this song sheet music were issued by the leading music publishing houses (“Music”, “Soviet Composer”) and in “Rovesnik” magazine with the total circulation of 665 thousand copies [17].

It is indicative that all these sheet music publications did not contain the original text of the song in English, and were accompanied only by the lyrics in Russian translated by M. Podberezhsky, which were extremely far from the initial content of the song. First of all, they randomly changed the geographical names in the song – instead of Moscow, Ukraine and Georgia, the Russian version includes the Caucasus, Samarkand, Leningrad and Suzdal. Secondly, all

the frenzy of the Beatles' character anticipating his meeting with Soviet beauties came down to the insipid line: "Words can't express what kind of eyes the girls here have!" Finally, while the original text was an ironic rethinking of the clichés from an American songbook, in the Russian version it was flooded with impersonal clichés from the Soviet song discourse of those years ("Our huge plane", "I'm very happy, guys!", "Buildings amaze", "I have cities and mountains to see").

In terms of music, the Soviet edition was much closer to the original. It is no secret that popular music, unlike traditional academic works, is not much notified, due to its predominantly performative nature. Nevertheless, in terms of pitch, rhythmic pattern and harmony basis, the Soviet edition corresponded very precisely to the original sound of the song. Meanwhile, that sheet music was a piano reduction of the song, which naturally lacked any hint of electro guitar solo in the bridge. What is more, it did not contain that very provocative pun ("Back in U.S., back in U.S., back in U.S.S.R.") based on the constant repetition of the chorus tune.

However, it is fairly clear that the Soviet publications of "Back in the USSR" sheet music were used by the Beatles' fans not literally, but as a kind of "cheat sheet". According to Vladimir Bokarev and Yuri Mitrofanov, "none of the Soviet performers recorded a version of "Back in the USSR" with Russian lyrics, but performed it in English at concerts" [18]. Apparently, the same thing happened with the music basis, in particular, with the arrangement, when both professional and amateur bands copied the sound of the song from the original records of the Beatles. As Terry Bright summarizes, among the first Soviet amateur pop bands in the 1960s, it was the Beatles that became a "model for learning the roots of guitar pop and the techniques of playing and singing" [19].

Taking the example of the perception and adaptation of the Beatles' "Back in the USSR" in the Soviet Union, we inevitably encounter a phenomenon that Alexei Yurchak refers to as "imaginary West" – a spectrum of ideas about foreign countries, which was formed among Soviet citizens in the context of paradoxical ideology and inconsistent cultural policy of the state [20]. According to the researcher, by the 1970s, thousands of young people all over the country were interpreting songs of Western rock bands, translating their lyrics and reflecting on the peculiarities of the music style. "Participating in this creative process of cultural interpretation, the representatives of the last Soviet generation made Western music closer to them. "The Beatles", "Deep Purple", "Pink Floyd" were transformed into an element of the local context, and the local context in this process was transformed into something new, both Soviet and non-Soviet, that existed outside the authoritarian discourse of the ruling party's. <...> [Western rock music] played a tremendous role in the creation of cultural meanings which were important for the last Soviet generation, but that were different from the original and of which the British band [the Beatles] was barely aware of" [21].

It must be admitted, however, that the Beatles, in the case of "Back in the USSR," presented the world with a deliberately imaginary, thoroughly fictional, "tourist" image

of the Soviet Union. As shown above, the mysterious super-Power was explored by means of American popular culture – well-known and familiar to Paul McCartney as the author of the song. The picture of the world presented by McCartney had nothing to do with the real Soviet Union, which is confirmed by the absurd nature of the official "translation" of the lyrics into Russian. When the song appeared, its mission was certainly not to make its images credible, but to try to start a distance dialogue with another country in the language of art most shared by the youngest generation – popular music. As history has shown, this mission of the Beatles was a success.

III. STING'S "RUSSIANS": THROUGH THE ART OF THE PAST TO THE COMMON FUTURE

The next important step in understanding the image of the Soviet Union in popular music was Sting's song "Russians", which was included in his debut solo album "The Dream of the Blue Turtles" (1985). In a political context, this song was the quintessence of European reflection on the consequences of the protracted Cold War, and at the same time the anticipation of its imminent end. The lyrics, which are very philosophical for the popular musical genre, reflect on the mutual threats of Soviet and American politicians, contrasting them with universal human values, in particular thoughts about the next generation:

We share the same biology, regardless of ideology

Believe me when I say to you

I hope the Russians love their children too.

In an attempt to enter the mentality of another nation, Sting turns to two sources of cultural codes – Soviet children's television series and Sergei Prokofiev's music. His semi-legal watching of the former, as the singer repeatedly told in his interviews, encouraged him to write a song about Russians. "What struck me when I was watching these programmes was how much care and attention and clearly love have gone into these programmes, and these were our enemies, but they clearly loved their children just like we love ours... all of us had a stake in the future, which was our children" [22]. Having realized this, Sting realized how artificial the image of the enemy country, created in the Western media, was. The singer's idea inspired him to write a song about Russians and became its poetic basis.

As a musical basis, Sting quoted the theme of "Romance" from Sergei Prokofiev's music to the film "Lieutenant Kizhe" (directed by A. Feinzimmer, 1934). It is interesting to trace the genealogy of this Prokofiev theme. As the film is set in the late 18th century, during the reign of Emperor Paul, as Kevin Bartig notes, "Prokofiev builds his depiction of imperial Saint Petersburg on a traditional tonal foundation, a late eighteenth-century patina of common-practice-period conventions for which the new simplicity was particularly well suited" [23]. As lyrics, the composer used poetry of the poet of that era, I.I. Dmitriev, "Moans the Grey-blue Little Dove", which existed in the form of a popular urban romance to the music of O.M. Dubensky. This romance was undoubtedly known to Prokofiev, but he insisted on

composing a new melody [24], which he created "in the style of Russian sentimental romance"[25]. In the original context – in the film music – "Romance", according to Mikhail Arkhipov, is an expression of the character's longing for her beloved, with clear motifs of "eternal" separation, supreme fidelity, ephemeral dreams, emotional loneliness and yearning [26].

In Sting's song, however, this musical theme sounds completely different. Prokofiev's leitmotif turns from a lullaby romance into an alarm bell. It was due to speeding up the pace, introducing bells into the arrangement and a heavy sound of percussion instruments. What is more, the plagal cadence, which initially gave intonation softness to the melody, in the new context brings asceticism and even severity to the music. In general, Prokofiev theme is very skillfully integrated into the song music, thus enhancing its original drama.

This song video is also conceptual in its essence and is full of all various allusions. Its meanings are based on the contrast between old age and childhood, weak loneliness and acrobatic plasticity, lost time and future opportunities. The video helps to see the parallels with many European films. For instance, the celebration of an athletic body refers to "Olympia" (1936) by Leni Riefenstahl, and the old man in a castle thinking about the past refers to the beginning of "Wild Strawberries" (1957) by Ingmar Bergman.

The video, as well as the lyrics and music of the song, is not entertaining, but, on the contrary, makes us think seriously about the events taking place in the world political arena. It is not an abstract debate that the song aims at. It rather evokes concerns based on people's personal experience: "How can I save my little boy from Oppenheimer's deadly toy?" – meaning a nuclear bomb.

In this song, Russia is not presented as a weird or barbaric country, as it was in the disco hits of the late 1970s². On the contrary, for the first time a European declares the commonality of different nations, finding it in love to children and appealing to the heritage of the "big" art. In a very complicated period of political relations between the countries, Sting calls for awareness of the current events and a thoughtful look into the image of the "sworn" enemy.

IV. ROBBIE WILLIAMS'S "PARTY LIKE A RUSSIAN": AN (UN)FLATTERING PORTRAIT OF A NEW CHARACTER

With the disappearance of the Iron Curtain, many old myths about Russia in Europe were dispersed, but new ones gradually replaced them. One of them was the image of a super-rich Russian oligarch, whose satirical portrait was presented in Robbie Williams' song "Party like a Russian" in 2016 ("The Heavy Entertainment Show" album).

Robbie Williams insists that he aimed to show that, unlike Russians, prim and proper Brits do not know how to really have fun [27]. Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that the main features of the character in the song are not

cheerfulness or carelessness, but arrogance, aggressiveness and ostentatious wastefulness.

The song is about an oligarch who is building a space station with the money left from what he has stolen ("To alleviate the cash from a whole entire nation/ Take my loose change and build my own space station"). He smiles only when it is to his advantage ("I never ever smile unless I've something to promote"). He constantly stimulates himself with various doping agents ("I've got Stoli and Bolly and Molly, so I'm jolly") and makes other people deal with his enemies ("Act highfalutin' while my boys put the boots in/They do the can-can"). There are also parallels with Rasputin ("I'm a modern Rasputin") and the revolution ("There's revolution in the air") – these images not only refer to the famous "Boney M." hit, but also clearly mock at the constant Europeans' fear of Russia. The text is full of associations based on a large number of slang words, which are easily understood by native speakers, but have variations in translation when interpreted into Russian [28].

While the lyrics of this popular song have been interpreted in detail, the music has mostly been neglected, although it does contain no less significant symbolic codes. For example, as a leitmotif (sample), the main theme of "Dance of the Knights" from S.S. Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" ballet is used, which determines the nature of the whole song. In the ballet itself, this motif is known to refer to the intonation complex of hostility themes which describe the confrontation between the two families [29]. According to Viktor Zuckerman, in this theme, Prokofiev has applied rather common attributes of a march procession (dotted rhythm, fanfare and triad motifs, measured and strong accompaniment, quiet square structure) [30]. However, these, in fact, neutral techniques were frankly hyperbolized by the composer, bringing them, on the one hand, to the limit, and on the other hand – to primitiveness, maximum simplicity, which was reconsidered as a means of new expression. As a result, the belligerent, gloomy dance has become an image of the generalized Middle Ages, a harsh and cruel way of life [31], causing a feeling of evil, cruel power [32].

In the context of the song "Party like a Russian", all the above described semantics of Prokofiev theme benefits the image of modern Russians in the eyes of the West. The chosen leitmotif becomes a symbol of the power sweeping away everything in its path, and gives a pronounced aggressive connotation to the song. There is another musical technique that sounds equally harsh – the male voice choir, singing in unison in the background. As a way to present certain national traditions (reference to the Soviet group singing of the 1920s), the choir becomes a kind of mask of emotional restraint and asceticism to hide a spontaneous, uncontrollable energy behind.

Thus, the lyrics of the song as well as its music create a polyphonic image of the character. The text is a satire of his hedonistic lifestyle, emphasizing an extremely selfish and cynical manner of behavior, while the music characterizes the character as an aggressive and wicked man.

In the video, the allusions to classical ballet are the main visual symbol of Russia. The main character's maids are

² The following songs are meant: "Rasputin" (1978) by "Boney M.", "Moskau" by "Genghis Khan" (1979).

wearing kind of ballet tutus of black color and are dancing around en pointe. However, in this case, ballet is not a quintessence of aesthetic beauty and grace. It is rather a means of execution with reference to sadomasochistic erotic art. Another group of girls dressed in white – whether wedding dresses or ball gowns – arrange their alternative orgy, first frantically rushing all together towards the camera, and then passionately smearing each other with ice cream. In those two kinds of women's corps de ballet in the video, Marietta Božović sees another symbol of classical ballet – the contrast between the Black and White Swans [33]. In this case, however, ballet is only a screen again with Dionysian forces hiding behind all the glitz and glamour.

Finally, the behaviour of Robbie Williams himself completes the image of a Russian oligarch in the eyes of Europeans. His character's problem is that, despite having luxurious apartments, numerous retinue and pretentious outfits, he is not able to be happy. Best of all, the singer managed to imitate a heavy piercing look and to create an image of a person who never smiles. We see a kind of Nutcracker of the beginning of the XXI century – a man with mechanized gestures, carefully hiding his emotions, fabulously wealthy and mysterious. Time and again, "partying like a Russian" comes down to either gloomy despair or orgiastic permissiveness, presenting an extremely ambivalent image of a new Russian character.

Undoubtedly, such a bright, provocative image of Russians, far from conventional patterns, provoked much comment in the media and provided material for parody in popular culture. In the article, we will confine ourselves to the reaction to Robbie Williams's song in Russian media.

In the official discourse, presented primarily in the media, several strategies in the interpretation of "Party like a Russian" can be identified. The perception of this work of pop culture "in all seriousness" leads to the conclusion about the development of a new round of the Cold War between Russia and the West [34]. In particular, this leads to very caustic comments by journalists, who review Williams's song in detail and leave no doubt about its complete absurdity and figurative incompetence [35]. Another strategy, on the contrary, begins to compare the lyrics of the song word by word with the facts of modern history of Russia, finding direct sources of the subjects presented in the song [36]. Both approaches, in fact, clarify little in the content of the song itself as well as in the cultural and political context of the era. The examples of the song adaptation in popular culture, however, become much more illustrative sources of interpretation.

For instance, the First Channel broadcast "The Kings of Lip-syncing" programme, which presented a studio production of the video starring Leonid Yarmolnik [37]. Despite the rather accurate reproduction of the visual images from the original video, this interpretation can hardly be called successful. Leonid Yarmolnik not only openly failed to coincide with the phonogram, but also appeared to be completely helpless in depicting the personality of the character. In this case, it is rather curious that the leading Russian TV channel tried to domestically "reshoot" the

popular hit. Such a step can be considered as an attempt at an intercultural dialogue, which reveals all the complexity of the structure of the song as well as Western pop culture as a whole. Neither of them, as it turned out in the course of "translation", can be formally copied, but require a lot of charisma along with refined imagery.

Another example of the hit rehash was an advertising campaign of "Beeline" cellular operator. In December 2017, on the New Year's eve, a video with a slogan "Unlimited Internet access for an unlimited Russian soul" [38] was released. It was aimed at promoting a package of services for clients planning their vacations abroad. Its plot is built around constant photographing and posting photos of various activities at the beach resort – lying in a hammock with a cocktail, photos with different animals, jumping into the pool, etc. It all contributes to the atmosphere of never-ending pleasure and joy, which should be captured in detail. This celebration of life results in the apogee of self-presentation, since most of the photos in the video are selfies. It has Robbie Williams's song playing in the background with the lyrics in Russian and the rhyming chorus going: "Party like a Russian, all the beaches are waiting for us".

In this interpretation, the image of Russian tourists abroad, which is very questionable in its wastefulness, is presented as a reason for national pride, because only Russian tourists, according to the idea of the video, can afford to live the high life in any part of the world. Surely, in this aspect, there is a symbolic connection of this commercial with the message of the original version of the song. However, while Robbie Williams has such an image of Russians as a reason for total irony and even satire, in the domestic commercial, this idea is presented seriously, as the top of the evolutionary ladder of consumption. The only visual image borrowed from Robbie Williams' video is that of ballerinas, who were turned into beach beauties with selfie-sticks (instead of sadomasochistic whips) and lifebuoys (instead of ballet tutus). The theme of Russian ballet, which has returned to its homeland, finally loses any allusions to classical art, turning into nothing more than material for a spectacular advertising picture.

V. CONCLUSION

Even a targeted selection of songs by British singers about Russia allows us to trace the development of an intercultural dialogue in a certain historical perspective. Firstly, significant changes have occurred in the interpretation of social and political subtexts. Starting from a deliberately fictional image of another country ("Back in the USSR") through the open voicing of the problem of the Cold War ("Russians"), the song discourse comes to a total irony over certain representatives of the nation ("Party like a Russian"). In this paradigm, the penetration into the mentality of another culture has become not so much deeper and more meaningful, as more ironic and detailed in terms of the plot. Whereas the Beatles' song depicts the image of a pseudo-Soviet, actually American popular culture character, Robbie Williams gives a caricature of a new Russian oligarch, based on the real prototypes he knows personally.

Secondly, no less dramatic shifts have occurred in the ways of artistic reflection of national peculiarities. From openly borrowing American culture to depict a Soviet country ("Back in the USSR") through the use of quotations from "big" national music ("Russians") to the transformation of such a quotation into a symbolic "weapon" against the depicted nation ("Party like a Russian"). While the Beatles tended to quote a lot of American popular songs and styles, Sting and Robbie Williams intended to introduce authentic musical motifs into their songs. Even in those two songs, however, the motifs have been interpreted according to the laws of the Western music industry.

Thirdly, it would be interesting to note the changes in the response to the songs about Russia in our country. However, those changes, we must admit, are not so significant. The example of "translating" into Russian the lyrics of the two songs with a fifty-year difference ("Back in the USSR" and "Party like a Russian") is very illustrative here. In both cases, the "translated" image turned out to be very far from the original and meant to create an atmosphere of some ideal space. This intention was determined by the laws of ideology: in the former case – political, in the latter one – economic (consumer). At the same time, both of the songs (by Paul McCartney and Robbie Williams) were mostly perceived as a symbolic compliment to the nation by the very fact that Western popular culture took an interest in another distant country.

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