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Interview with Ukrainian punk band Cios: “War is in full swing and meatgrinder is only gaining”

Wednesday 7 September 2022, by [Cios](#), [LE TRÉHONDAT Patrick](#) (Date first published: 10 August 2022).

Patrick Le Tréhondat}: Can you introduce your band, its history and the music you play?

Hello! We are Cios band, it sounds like “Chos” because the name is in Polish. We are from Ukraine from small city Khmelnytskyi. In our band we have Punkrat, Dima, Vlad on guitar/vocals, bass, drums respectively. We started in 2011 and last year we celebrated our 10th anniversary. We play punk music and call it “Streetpunk”. We sing about the surrounding reality and its problems. We have 4 albums and 2 EPs. You can hear it on bandcamp and all streaming platforms.



How did you experience the imperialist aggression of Russia? Where were you that day and what did you think about how you live personally since the 24 February ?

We have not survived of imperialist aggression by Russia yet. Now it is in full swing and meatgrinder is only gaining. About the beginning of war. We were to go on tour on the morning of February 25, but on the morning of February 24th the war is began. We discussed this situation with members, canceled the tour and everyone began to deal with their family and primary issues. As a rule it was stocking up on food and medicine, family evacuating and preparing shelters. Rumors were flying in the air even before the 24th, we were already doing some minimum supplies, watching videos “how to behave in artillery fire” and other things. But still it is impossible to be fully ready for war, never.

Our vocalist Punkrat spent first days of war in east of the country. In Gulyaypole town. You may know this name because it was birthplace of Nestor Makhno and center of anarchist activity during the revolution. Ukrainian defense was disorganized in that direction, Russia was moving and occupied territory very quickly. He left there and returned to Khmelnytsky on an evacuation train, while neighboring villages on both sides were already under artillery fire. Next day Russia began bombing Gulyaypole and continues to do so to this day.

Bass player Dima met the war in Bucha region near Kiev. There were very brutal war crimes against civilians in Bucha. He met the war with his backpack packed, because on the 24th he had to go to

Khmelnyskyi and go on tour from there. But instead of concerts he went to dig trenches and build barricades in his city. Throughout the entire phase of the war in the Kiev region, he was on frontline and continued to make fortifications under artillery fire. The drummer Vlad also had to be quite nervous. All of his relatives, also from Kiev region. In there was an active offensive and occupation almost reached his district.

And for the daily life of your group, what has changed? your rehearsals? your concerts ? how is it going?

The first month of the war Cios was completely inactive. In next period there was little volunteer and humanitarian activity and process of resuming band activities. At the moment Cios is based in its hometown Khmelnyskyi. Is a relatively peaceful region in the western of the country. And now we're working. When we resumed activity, we tried to do a benefit concert in a bomb shelter. At that time events were forbidden in the country. Later we did it in an open area, after the government allowed music events.

Now concerts in Ukraine are complicated, not many clubs, expensive gasoline and problems with logistics, constant rocket attacks. And simply, many people don't care about concerts.

Most of men cannot officially leave Ukraine now. Music band can leave, but it requires a long bureaucratic procedure with the Ministry of Culture. Because we are a punk band, we don't feel comfortable doing that. We decided to concentrate on new material. Now we are rehearsing, composing and getting ready for new album.

You sing in Ukrainian and Russian. Concerning Russian will you continue to sing in Russian? How do you see this language question ?

Yes, we will continue to sing in russian. There are a lot of people in Ukraine who speak russian in daily life. Including some people of our band. And we, first and foremost, refer to ourselves as people. Ukrainian language is a beautiful and pleasant language. And using it is a good thing. But it has been in academic and literary space for a very long time. So it's not suitable for all of our songs. For a punk band singing about shit around, it's not easy to use technically. Many thoughts understandable to every working guy or teenager from street is difficult to convey in ukrainian. As for the language issue as a social phenomen. We are not supporters of nationalism. Ukraine is a large and diverse country. Russian-speaking Ukrainians here are a common phenomen, which is hundreds of years old. As in any large country with a diverse history people speak different languages. We do not consider this language to be the language of occupant. Occupiers can speak chechen and tatar, it doesn't make them any better.

If I'm not mistaken I believe that in your songs you talk about corruption, cops, poverty, do you have a particular political or social expression in your artistic production?

Yes, that's right. And also about oppression, working class problems, fascism and many other problems in our society. Social expression is the main focus of our songs. We are not a political band and we don't label our band in any way on political spectrum. We speak on behalf of the common people to whom we directly relate. The political views of our members is vary, but for the most part they are left views.

Do you think this war will influence your music, the lyrics of your songs?

Of course! We have always tried to be as relevant as possible. And war directly affects everyone and at the moment it is our biggest problem. We just can't avoid it. Almost all of our new songs will be about the war and the current situation in Ukraine in one way or another.

How do you see the future?

How do we see our future? No future.

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Interview by Patrick Le Tréhondat

P.S.

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