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"Translated by Arkadiy Kots" Weaponization, Consecration, Monumentalization and Reincarnation of the Russian "Internationale"

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Abstract

The impact of Arkadiy Kots as the translator of "L'Internationale" on Russian society is easy to underestimate. His Russian song translation, which emerged as a product of the counterculture, was first weaponized by Lenin to motivate workers to engage in the Russian Revolution. Then, it became the object of consecration: it was made the first anthem of the Soviet Union. However, with the passing of time, the song became an ideological and diplomatic issue, which under Stalin was solved by its monumentalization. As an established monument, Kots's translation remained a fixture in Soviet culture until the very collapse of the empire. It is obvious that the failure of the Soviet experiment heavily damaged Kots's cultural value. Nevertheless, his song translation remains present in post-Soviet Russia as the anthem of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. At the same time, Kots also serves as an inspiration for the protest band that under his name has translated "L'Estaca", which, as the most popular protest song of our time, could be seen as a reincarnation of "L'Internationale".

Keywords: Arkadiy Kots, The Internationale, rock band, translator, anthem, Soviet Union

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"Translated by Arkadiy Kots"

Weaponization, Consecration, Monumentalization and Reincarnation of the Russian "Internationale"

The impact of Arkadiy Kots as the translator of "L'Internationale" on Russian society is easy to underestimate. His Russian song translation, which emerged as a product of the counterculture, was first weaponized by Lenin to motivate workers to engage in the Russian Revolution. Then, it became the object of consecration: it was made the first anthem of the Soviet Union. However, with the passing of time, the song became an ideological and diplomatic issue, which under Stalin was solved by its monumentalization. As an established monument, Kots's translation remained a fixture in Soviet culture until the very collapse of the empire. It is obvious that the failure of the Soviet experiment heavily damaged Kots's cultural value. Nevertheless, his song translation remains present in post-Soviet Russia as the anthem of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. At the same time, Kots also serves as an inspiration for the protest band that under his name has translated "L'Estaca", which, as the most popular protest song of our time, could be seen as a reincarnation of "L'Internationale".

Introduction

It is probably not an overstatement to say that most songs serve a primarily aesthetic purpose. Although revolutionary songs can also generate an aesthetic effect, their main purpose is pragmatic: they seek to effect change in the world by contributing to the overthrow of a regime. In the case of "L'Internationale", the aim was to transform capitalist society into a socialist society. Although efforts to achieve this had been undertaken in numerous countries worldwide, Russia is the very first country in which a revolution in the name of socialism was actually successfully carried out. In that sense, the Russian version of "L'Internationale" was groundbreaking. The fact that this communist regime has meanwhile collapsed adds an extra dimension. The question that arises is how this major historical event has affected the song's afterlife. In more general terms, this article seeks to explore how the Russian version of "L'Internationale" has functioned in Russian society in shifting historical and political contexts.

In our chronological overview of the different approaches the Russian culture has had towards the translation of "L'Internationale" and its translator, we will make use of different terms. 'Weaponization' is the act of turning something into a weapon. The concept of 'consecration' stems from Bourdieu (1993: 11). It refers to the development of 'symbolic capital' through the power of state and cultural institutions. The term 'monumentalization' is loosely inspired by Meyer (2023: 7–8). We use it to refer to the 'heritage project of self- and collective identity building' of the Soviets, in the form of 'recording

and preservation of knowledge about their homeland'. 'Reincarnation', lastly, will be used to speak about the rebirth of Arkadiy Kots in a metaphorical sense.

Gielkens (1998: 72) points out that "almost without exception, the historiography about 'The Internationale' comes from the leftist movement itself",[1] often resulting in mythologized anecdotes. This caveat is most certainly applicable to the Russian sources that address "L'Internationale" and its Russian translation. It speaks volumes that one of the best documented books on this song, namely *Muzyka – revolyutsii*, is even dedicated to its Russian translator in his capacity as one of the "creators of the immortal 'supreme song of the revolution'" (DREYDEN 1981: 3).[2] Thus, one must be cautious when gathering supposed facts from the available sources. That being said, there is no reason to presume that information provided by individuals who adhere to an ideology different from that expressed in the song would be more reliable.

Translated by Arkadiy Kots

It is not surprising that Arkadiy Kots (1872–1943), with whose life the creation and circulation of the Russian version of "L'Internationale" is intimately interwoven, has played an active role in the socialist movement of Russia. The fact that he was of Jewish origin seems to have been crucial for his approach to socialism, given the discrimination of Jews under the tsarist rule, but he has not always been a supporter of the Bolsheviks.

Arkadiy (actually Aron) Kots was born in 1872 in Odessa, as the son of a low-level official and dockworker. In the early 1880s, pogroms took place in Odessa, on which Kots wrote poetry as a young adolescent. After completing urban elementary school in Odessa, at the age of 15, he wished to continue his studies but was not allowed into a local high school because of the quotas on Jews. With the help of his older brother, he was able to pursue further studies two years later in the Donbas, at the Mining Institute. In 1893, Kots received the degree of *Steiger* (pit foreman). After his apprenticeship, he started working in coal mines near Moscow. When employed in a mine close to Tula, he twice met with the Russian writer Tolstoy, by whose philosophy he was greatly impressed (LIVSHITS 2009).

Because he was Jewish, the mere presence of the Kots family in the Moscow region was illegal. He had to return to the Donbas, where between 1894 and 1897 he worked in mines near Youzovka (now Donetsk). Then, he fled Russia, as more than two million Jews did between 1881 and 1920. While most fled to the United States or the Ottoman Empire, Kots chose a less common destination: France. From 1897 to 1902, he studied mining engineering in Paris. As a student, he frequented the Russian diaspora – he was involved in a student choir of Russian political emigrants – and the socialist movement

[1] Original text: "De geschiedschrijving over de Internationale is bijna zonder uitzondering afkomstig uit de linkse beweging zelf." All translations from Dutch and Russian are mine, unless otherwise specified.

[2] Original text: "создателей бессмертной «песни песней революции»".

(DREYDEN 1981: 52, 64). In 1899, he attended the Congress of French socialist organizations, where he heard the official anthem of the socialist movement, "L'Internationale" (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 6). According to the Soviet version of facts, he was deeply impressed by the collective performance, which he claimed ended in a feeling of unity, hugs and kisses (DREYDEN 1981: 41–42).

Kots, who used to be a Tolstoian pacifist, eagerly attended lectures by famous revolutionary orators. His poetry also underwent a metamorphosis: while in Russia he had written romantic-allegorical poetry, in France he began to experiment with militant civil-revolutionary lyric (CHERNYAYEV 2023). In hindsight, it is tempting to assert that with his linguistic background, ideological views, musical affinity, and literary preferences, Kots must have sensed a calling to translate "L'Internationale". At the time, there was no established translation of the song, although a Russian translation, in prose, had been made as early as 1896 by the Russian revolutionary Yekaterina Barteneva (DREYDEN 1988: 48–49). This version, however, was never popularized. When the first issue of the political newspaper of Russian socialist emigrants *Iskra* appeared in Leipzig in December 1900, it contained a report on the International Socialist Congress that was held in Paris, including the *French* text of the chorus of "L'Internationale" (RAKHOVSKIY 1900: 23). Ironically, the article contained an appeal to gather under the sounds of "L'Internationale", while the Russian workers did not understand any French, and a full, singable translation was not provided.

After the turn of the century, translations of "L'Internationale" were made in almost all European languages (GIELKENS 1998: 78). Kots followed this trend: in 1902, he wrote his own translation (KARABANOV 2015: 237). Since it was intended to be sung by the Russian labour movement to the music written by the Belgian-French socialist Pierre De Geyter (1848–1932), he used a similar metre and rhyme scheme (namely aBaBcDcD, with an alternation between feminine and masculine rhyme). At the same time, as becomes evident from a glance at the macro-structural features, Kots's translation strategy was not targeted at reproducing the French source text to the full extent. As a matter of fact, he translated only three stanzas out of the six. According to his own testimony, these shortenings were motivated by his desire to make the original song – which already in itself is "a collection of socialist slogans" (GIELKENS 1999: 33)[3] – "shorter, and also more suitable to be performed, to make it easier for the battle slogans to penetrate the broad working-class masses" (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 6).[4]

Kots selected the first, second and sixth stanzas of the original to reproduce. According to his own words, he found stanza 1 "most important in content and most striking in artistic terms" (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 6).[5] Stanza 2 was chosen because it was about the

[3] Original text: "[d]e originele tekst van de Internationale eigenlijk een verzameling socialistische leuzen."

[4] Original text: "сделать песню более краткой, более удобной для исполнения, чтобы облегчить проникновение ее крылатых боевых лозунгов в широкие рабочие массы."

[5] Original text: "наиболее значительной по содержанию, а в художественном отоношении самой яркой."

so-called essence of the workers' struggle: the need to go to war together with the masses, and not as a hero acting alone (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 7). This reasoning, however, does not take into account the fact that the corresponding stanza of the source text makes no mention of a hero. That stanza 6 was retained is convincingly explained by Sidorovskiy (1987: 7) by the fact that it speaks "of the transfer of the land to the working peasants, who were particularly important in agrarian Russia".[6]

Yet, this still does not explain why the third, fourth and fifth stanzas were completely omitted in the Russian lyric. Stanza 3 of the source text is about the moral bankruptcy of the state and the law, the unfair treatment of the rich and the need for equality. In stanza 4, the industrialists ("les rois de la mine et du rail") [the kings of mines and rails] are held responsible for theft vis-à-vis the workers, who want to get their share ("le peuple ne veut que son dû") ["the people only want what they're due"]. Stanza 5 focuses on kings and military superiors, who are threatened with strikes ("la grève aux armées") ["strike in the armies"] and even death ("nos balles / sont pour les propres généraux") ["our bullets / are for our own generals"]. These stanzas could also have spoken to people in a Russian context. The 'kings' mentioned in stanzas 4 and 5 could easily have been replaced by 'emperors' or the more general term 'monarchs' in order to fit the Russian frame of reference.

Kots did not refrain from micro-textual interventions either. In stanza 1 of the French song, the cursed and the starving are called upon to rise up, to put an end to the past, to change the world. In the corresponding Russian stanza, this message remains more or less the same, but extra pathos is added by stating that our "outraged mind" is ready to engage in "a deadly fight".

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1902)**
Debout ! Les damnés de la terre !	Вставай, проклятьем заклеймённый,
Debout ! Les forçats de la faim !	Весь мир голодных и рабов!
La raison tonne en son cratère,	Кипит наш разум *возмущённый*
C'est l'éruption de la fin.	И в *смертный бой* вести готов.
Du passé faisons table rase,	Весь мир насилья мы разроем
Foule esclave, debout ! Debout !	До основанья, а затем
Le monde va changer de base :	Мы наш, мы новый мир построим –
Nous ne sommes rien, soyons tout !	Кто был ничем, тот станет всем.[7]

It is interesting to note about the translation of the chorus that its first line reads – at least in this version, which, as we will see, differs from the canonical version – "this *will*

[6] Original text: "о передаче земли трудовому крестьянству, что в условиях крестьянской России имело значение особое."

[7] Emphasis added. Translation into English from the Russian: "Stand up, branded by the curse, / the whole world's starving and slaves! / Our *outraged* mind is boiling, / Ready to lead into a *deadly fight*. / We will dig up this world of violence / Down to the foundation, and then / We, we will build our new world: / He who was nothing will become everything!"

be the final / and decisive battle," while the source text situates the battle not in the future, but in the present: "C'*est* la lutte finale" (emphasis added). This translation choice could stem from a concern for metre. At the same time, the chosen wording was consistent with the hope of the left-wing Russian revolutionaries for a large-scale popular uprising to come. Another remarkable translation shift in the chorus concerns the last line, "L'Internationale / sera le genre humain" ["The Internationale / will be humankind"]. It was changed into "With 'The Internationale' / the human race will wake up" (see also DROBINSKIY 1930: 545).

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1902)**
C'est la lutte finale	Это *будет* последний
Groupons-nous, et demain,	И решительный бой;
L'Internationale,	*С Интернационалом*
Sera le genre humain.	*Воспрянет род людской!*[8]

According to stanza 2 of the source text, salvation from above is not to be expected: "Il n'est pas de sauveurs souprêmes, / Ni Dieu, ni César, ni tribun". ["There are no supreme saviours / Neither God, nor Caesar, nor tribune"] Interestingly, the word "tribun" (referring to the magistracy) in the Russian text was rendered as "hero", implying that people should not wait for some individual hero to come. By turning away from individual heroism, the song can no longer be used to create a cult around a leader: it glorifies only the power of the collectivity.

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1902)**
Il n'est pas de sauveurs suprêmes,	Никто не даст нам избавленья:
Ni Dieu, ni César, ni tribun,	Ни бог, ни царь и *не герой*.
Producteurs sauvons-nous nous-mêmes!	Добьёмся мы освобожденья
Décrétons le salut commun !	Своею собственной рукой.
Pour que le voleur rende gorge,	Чтоб свергнуть гнёт рукой умелой,
Pour tirer l'esprit du cachot,	Отвоевать своё добро,
Soufflons nous-mêmes notre forge,	Вздувайте горн и куйте смело,
Battons le fer quand il est chaud!	Пока железо горячо![9]

In the third and final stanza of Kots's translation, corresponding with stanza 6 of the source text, the original agrarian touch ("paysans") was omitted. This is remarkable, since Russia was still very agrarian at that time. On the other hand, a military connotation has been added ("workers [...] of the army of labour"), which resonates with

[8] Emphasis added. Translation into English: "This *will be* our final / and decisive battle; / *With* 'The Internationale' / *the human race will wake up!*"

[9] Emphasis added. Translation into English from the Russian: "No one will give us deliverance, / Not a god, nor a tsar, nor *a hero*. / We will get our liberation, / With our own hands. / To cast down the yoke with a skilled hand, / To reconquer what is ours — / Fire up the furnace and hammer boldly, / while the iron is hot!"

Russia's deep-rooted militarization. It is also notable that the birds of prey, "les corbeaux, les vautours" ("the ravens and vultures"), have been changed to the even more demonizing "a horde of dogs and torturers".

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1902)**
Ouvriers, Paysans, nous sommes	Лишь мы, работники всемирной
Le grand parti des travailleurs;	Великой *армии* труда,
La terre n'appartient qu'aux hommes,	Владеть землёй имеем право,
L'oisif ira loger ailleurs.	Но паразиты — никогда!
Combien de nos chairs se repaissent!	И если гром великий грянет
Mais si les corbeaux, les vautours,	Над *сворой псов и палачей*,
Un de ces matins disparaissent,	Для нас всё так же солнце станет
Le soleil brillera toujours!	Сиять огнём своих лучей.[10]

In Russia over the course of the past decades, numerous linguists have weighed the quality of Kots's translation. Clearly, there is a consensus that Kots, whose interventions were consistent with Lenin's view that art "must be understood and loved by the masses" (AL'SHVANG & TSUKERMAN 1977: 236),[11] has been able to deliver a text that lent itself extremely well to the Russian revolutionary movement. Dreykin (1981: 56, 57, 60), praises the translator's "aphoristic precision and vivid intonation" ("афорическая точность и живость интонации"). He observes "a poetic liberty" ("поэтическая вольность"), yet believes that the translator remains true to the authorial intent. The Soviet music expert Lev Sidorovskiy (1987: 6), in turn, asserts that Kots "has preserved the spirit of the original" and "managed to produce a sharply modern, distinctive text, which perfectly suited the main objectives of the new stage of the revolutionary movement."[12] More recently, Shapochkin (2013), on the basis of cognitive analysis, has attributed an enormous so-called pragmatic potential to the Russian text, which he believes to be based on the way the song pits "power" ("власть") and "justice" ("справедливость") against each other. This opposition is, obviously, also abundantly present in the French source text. Chernyayev (2023) too praises Kots for having "reinforced the song's revolutionary proclamatory sound".[13]

[10] Emphasis added. Translation into English: "Only we, the workers of the worldwide / Great *army* of labour, / Have the right to own the land, / But the parasites – never! / And if the great thunder rolls / Over *the pack of dogs and executioners*, / For us, the sun will forever / Shine on with its fiery beams."

[11] Original text: "Оно [исскусство] должно быть понятно этим массам и любимо ими."

[12] Original text: "Аркадий Коц сумел в то же время дать остро современный, самобытный текст, превохно отвечавший главным задачам нового этапа революционного движения."

[13] Original text: "переакцентировал отдельные детали текста, усилив его революционно-прокламационное звучание, при этом текст Коца впитал в себя перелицованные цитаты из коммунистического манифеста Маркса."

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the birth of the first singable Russian "Internationale" was a fact, but in order to live the life it was meant to live, and to mobilize the Russian speaking working-class masses, it first needed to be brought to them – censorship notwithstanding.

Weaponization

Kots's Russian translation of "L'Internationale" appeared in 1902, in the fifth issue of the social-democratic journal *Zhizn'* (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 6). The poem was printed without the music as part of a wider selection of poems by Kots, gathered under the umbrella title "Proletarian Poems" ("Пролетарские песни"). The magazine in question was illegal in Russia, and had to be published abroad (in Geneva). Thanks to Kots's translation also the members of the social-democratic avant-garde of Russian emigration who did not know French were able to become familiar with the song. Afterwards, the text was secretly distributed in Russia, together with the music, on separate flyers, as part of anthologies and also in handwritten form (DRUSKIN 1959: 16, 69). Kots was also personally involved in distributing his song translation in Russia (DREYDEN 1981: 74).

After the turn of the century, Kots had become an active member of the Russian socialist movement. In 1903, he had returned to the Donbas where he joined the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP). He engaged in propaganda and agitation in Mariupol and Odessa by publishing inflammatory poems and pamphlets in Russian translation. He also regularly contributed reports and essays as an editor to the newspaper *Iskra*. From time to time, he published individual books. A noteworthy example is his 1907 essay *Struggle for Universal Suffrage in Belgium (Борьба за всеобщее избирательное право в Бельгии)*. In that year, in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday in Russia, his collection *Proletarian Poems* was published in Saint Petersburg. It is known to be one of the very first poetry collections featuring class-struggle poetry published in Russia. However, it was immediately confiscated.

In the decade preceding the Russian Revolutions, Kots's translation of "L'Internationale" led a life of its own, independent of the translator's persona. Lenin made a case for transforming the song into a revolutionary weapon of struggle. By intensively promoting this song, his party distinguished itself from the social revolutionaries and the anarchists among the Russian emigration movements. The Russian text was sung by the delgates of the third congress of the RSDRP held in London in the spring of 1905. The conference proceedings mention that "the congress participants stood up and sang 'L'Internationale'". This indicates that by 1905 the song had acquired the status of the anthem of the RSDRP, even though no official resolution was adopted on the subject (DREYDEN 1981: 66).

Apart from distributing the song and its music, the Bolshevist leaders also began to promote the song by regularly quoting from it (DREYDEN 1981: 115). In 1912, Lenin even had the song lyrics placed in the very first issue of *Pravda*, which then functioned as the official mouthpiece of the RSDPR. On 3 January 1913, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pottier's death, Lenin devoted another article to his song

in *Pravda*, in which he claimed that "[n]o matter what country a conscious worker finds himself in […], he can find comrades and friends in the familiar tune of 'L'Internationale'" (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 5–6).[14] However, this was more an example of wishful thinking than an adequate representation of reality. In fact, in Russia where tsarist censorship ruled, on the eve of the Russian Revolution the song was still unknown to most workers. When Lenin returned from emigration on 3 April 1917 and arrived at Finland Station, he suggested that the crowd sing "The Internationale". He then noticed that only very few knew the song's words and melody. In March 1917, when the First World War was still raging in full force, Lenin had ordered in the fifth issue of the party newspaper *Pravda* that "the Russian revolutionary army [...] must learn the choral singing of 'The Internationale'" (DRUSKIN 1959: 7–8).[15] When on the eve of the October Revolution, Lenin addressed the Russian working masses in Petrograd during mass demonstrations in squares, yards and factories, his speeches systematically ended with the collective singing of Kots's version of "L'Internationale". In that way, Kots's song translation was used as a Bolshevik weapon.

Consecration

Kots's contribution to the Russian Revolution as a translator of "L'Internationale" did not bring him the slightest degree of fame in the turbulent years that immediately followed. The reason might be that, according to some sources, in 1914 he had joined the ranks of the Mensheviks (CHERNYAYEV 2023). In the early 1920s, after the Russian Civil War, during which he supported the Bolshevik government, Kots re-joined the Bolshevik Party and settled near Moscow. He worked in the metallurgical sector as an engineer and mine inspector, while his literary pursuits faded into the background. Only occasionally did he write brochures, including for children, and poems for Soviet magazines.

Kots had remained invisible as a translator, but his translation of "L'Internationale" was anything but. After the 1917 October Revolution, it was given a key role in Russia's cultural life, and – to put it in Bourdieuian terms – gained much symbolic capital. One might think that a song destined to spark a revolution would lose its relevance once the revolution was over. This was by no means the case. As Shilov (1963: 4) puts it, "The Internationale" had to help in the fight against the internal and foreign enemies of the young Soviet state. As a matter of fact, until the end of the Civil War (1917–1923), the Russian people had to be mobilized to protect the Bolsheviks' seizure of power against the White movement. What's more, Lenin wanted the revolution to spread to Russia's neighboring countries. The song had lost nothing of its relevance.

[14] Original text: "В какую бы страну ни попал сознательбный рабочий […] он может найти себе товарищей и друзей по знакомому напеву «Интернационала»."

[15] Original text: "Русская революционная армия […] должна обучиться хоровому пению «Интернационала»."

The February Revolution of 1917 had logically led to the prompt abolition of L'vov's Russian anthem "God Save the Tsar!" ("Боже, Царя храни!"), with lyrics by the romantic poet Zhukovsky. Because it was not immediately replaced by a new anthem, there was a vacuum (KARABANOV 2015: 237). In March 1917, the symbolist poet Bryusov called for a national contest to introduce a new anthem, but it did not come to that: the temporary Russian government had more important concerns (the ongoing World War). Whenever an anthem was appropriate, the so-called "Worker's Marseillaise" (to the melody of the Marseillaise, with lyrics by Lavrov) was played (KARABANOV 2015: 237).

As soon as the Bolsheviks took power, they replaced the "Worker's Marseillaise" with Kots's translation of "L'Internationale". From the beginning of 1918 onward, the song functioned as the anthem of the world's very first socialist state, Soviet Russia, which in the same year was renamed as the Russian Federative Socialist Republic (SHAPOCHKIN 2013: 134). It was performed at all official ceremonies, meetings and parades. When the Soviet Union was formed in 1922, the anthem passed from the Russian Soviet Republic to the newly created state. However, no official legal act endorsing it as the official anthem of the Soviet Union was made. The anthem was tacitly adopted. According to Karabanov (2015: 238), its lack of legal status was due to the fact that the early Soviet leaders, who still hoped that the Russian revolution would spread to other countries, considered "any national idea, even musical […] a bourgeois and counter-revolutionary fact".[16]

Interestingly, the version promoted by the Soviet authorities slightly differed from the version that had been created and published by Kots. To begin, the phrase "This *will be* our final / and decisive battle" ("Это будет последний / И решительный бой"; emphasis added) was replaced by "This *is* our final / and decisive battle" ("Это есть / наш последний/ И решительный бой"; emphasis added), which is closer to the French text. In 1927, this subtle modification became a theme in Mayakovsky's *Well done!* (DREYDEN 1981: 154). According to Sidorovskiy (1987: 7–8), who seems to take this poem literally, the change in question had emerged *during* the Russian Revolution itself. However, Druskin (1959: 17) contradicts this version. For instance, the 1919 Soviet Russian poster by A. Apsit (figure 1) illustrates that even after the Revolution, "The Internationale" continued to be printed and sung with the lyrics originally written by Kots (DREYDEN 1981: 154, 159).

[16] Original text: "[…] всякая национальная идея, даже музыкальная, трактовалась как проявление буржуазности и контрреволюция."

Figure 1: the poster "The Internationale" (1919) by A. Apsit,
with the song translation by Arkadiy Kots[17]

Another, no less drastic modification concerns the line "We will *dig up* this world of violence" ("весь мир насилья мы разроем"; emphasis added), in the first stanza of the song. In all Soviet publications this was changed to the more freely translated and

[17] This work is in the public domain in Russia according to Article 1281 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, Articles 5 and 6 of Law No. 231-FZ of the Russian Federation of 18 December 2006. Retrieved from:
http://redavantgarde.com/collection/show-collection/314-internationale-.html?authorId=131

much more aggressive phrase "We will *destroy* this world of violence" ("Весь мир насилья мы разрушим"; emphasis added), which in itself functioned as one of the slogans of the early Soviet Union. According to Druskin (1959: 17), this change was made by the masses themselves, at the expense of rhyme. The new version had been common since the years 1905–1906 (DREYDEN 1981: 150–151). Incidentally, it was also common among workers and sailors during the Revolution to sing the phrase "the human race will *rise* up" ("*восстанет* род людской") – again closer to the French – instead "the human race will *wake* up" ("*воспрянет* род людской"), but this change did not make it into the Soviet publications (DREYDEN 1981: 151).

Under Lenin, the consecration of "The Internationale" went further than its instauration as the state anthem. In the early 1920s, the song was ordered to be (re)translated into a wide range of languages spoken by the peoples of the Soviet Union. Already before the Soviet times, Kots's translation had served as the source text for the bulk of translations into the languages of the Russian Empire other than Russian. According to Dreyden (1981: 55, 111), the practice of using Kots's text as a source text for indirect translation continued after the revolution. A great many proletarian poets, and several renowned poets and writers, played a role in this centralized process (DROBINSKIY 1930: 546; DREYDEN 1981: 181–182; DREYDEN 1988: 190).

The prestige gained by "L'Internationale" and its Russian translation in the Soviet Union is also attested to by the fact that when Lenin was given a last salute by a thousand-strong crowd in January 1924, the song was played alongside Chopin and Beethoven. On this occasion, Kots's translation was sung by a choir. And when the farewell celebration came to an end, all Moscow's military orchestras played a funeral march that was followed by the melody of "L'Internationale".

Monumentalization

The "Cultural Revolution" (FITZPATRICK 1984), which had begun in the early 1920s and was basically meant to yield proletarian or socialist culture, took more imperative forms under Stalin. In a first phase, before the Second World War, Kots's translation of "L'Internationale" was still given an important role to play in Soviet culture.

The Soviet government began to care about De Geyter after an article about him appeared in the newspaper *Vechernyaya Moskva* on 19 December 1927. It was promptly decided to pay the composer of "L'Internationale" a monthly pension of $100 (DREYDEN 1981: 169). In the spring of 1928, he was even honourably invited to Moscow (DRUSKIN 1959: 15). After the now 80-year-old composer of the hymn was found healthy enough by a Soviet doctor attached to the Embassy of the Soviet Union (SU) in Paris, a trip to the Soviet Union was organized in the summer of 1929. The direct occasion was the sixth congress of the Comintern, founded by Lenin to fuel international revolution. In Moscow, De Geyter conducted a concert in which a choir sang "L'Internationale." In addition, under his direction, thousands of participants of the first edition of the international sports event Spartakiad sang his song on the Red

Square (DREYDEN 1981: 170–172). At that time, the Russian translator of "L'Internationale" still remained unknown: until the late 1920s, the text had been systematically published without mention of the translator (DREYDEN 1981: 51).

Although invisibility might seem an almost natural condition for literary translators, under Stalin quite a few became famous in the Soviet Union. They were mainly men of letters who had previously become known as authors of original works, got into trouble for ideological reasons, and then were given a second chance as literary translators. In this context, Brian Baer (2016: 116) uses the term "reauthorization". A textbook example is Pasternak, whom Fadeyev, the then head of the Soviet Writers' Union, in 1947 dubbed as "famous in Russia *as a translator* of Shakespeare" (ibid.). In light of the visibility that was given to translators under Stalin, it is not so surprising that Kots finally received recognition (KHENTOVA 1986). He again began to translate intensively in the early 1930s. His translations in leading newspapers and literary magazines included poetry by Béranger, Pottier and other socialists and poets of the Commune de Paris. He even translated a selection of poems by Charles Baudelaire, who was riskier, ideologically speaking.

Kots also decided to translate the stanzas of "L'Internationale" that he had left out of his song in 1902. The immediate trigger was the preparation of an anthology of Pottier's poems (DREYDEN 1981: 55). In 1937, the year when the Stalin terror was in full swing, the renewed, full Russian translation of "L'Internationale" was published in the eleventh issue of the famous Russian monthly literary magazine *Znamya*, under the title "Our Anthem" ("Наш гимн"; DRUSKIN 1959: 16). The newly translated verses were rhymed and metrical just like the old ones, and they also show major deviations from the source text in terms of meaning – which is in contrast to the previously translated stanzas. In the third stanza of the source text, for instance, there are no direct references to the first French verse, "l'état comprime et la loi triche" ("the state oppresses and the law cheats"). It is possible that the translator feared criticizing the state in these general terms. It is also interesting to note that the translated third stanza contains a sentence, of which there is no obvious correlation in the source text, that almost literally rearticulates Article 1 of the 1936 Stalin Constitution: "All power to the people of labour!" ("Вся власть народу трудовому!").

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1937)**
L'État comprime et la loi triche,	Довольно кровь сосать, *вампиры*,
L'impôt saigne le malheureux;	Тюрьмой, налогом, нищетой!
Nul devoir ne s'impose au riche,	У вас — вся власть, все блага мира,
Le droit du pauvre est un mot creux.	А наше право — звук пустой!
C'est assez languir en tutelle,	Мы жизнь построим по-иному —
L'égalité veut d'autres lois:	И вот наш лозунг боевой:
«Pas de droits sans devoirs, ditelle,	*Вся власть народу трудовому!*
Égaux, pas de devoirs sans droits!»[18]	А *дармоедов* всех долой![19]

[18] Emphasis added.

[19] Emphasis added. Translation into English of the Russian: "You've sucked enough of our blood, you *vampires*, / With prison, taxes and poverty! / You have all the power, all the blessings of the

In addition, in stanzas 3 and 4, the translation puts much more emphasis than the source text on discrediting those who were unwilling to work, using lexical elements such as "vampires" ("вампиры"), "moochers" ("дармоеды") and "parasites" ("тунеядцы"). This shift was perfectly consistent with Stalin's policy, in the sense that the implementation of economically unrealistic five-year plans was accompanied by an iron discipline and the criminal prosecution of so-called social parasites.

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1937)**
Hideux dans leur apothéose,	Презренны вы в своём богатстве,
Les rois de la mine et du rail,	Угля и стали короли!
Ont-ils jamais fait autre chose,	Вы ваши троны, *тунеядцы*,
Que dévaliser le travail ?	На наших спинах возвели.
Dans les coffres-forts de la bande,	Заводы, фабрики, палаты —
Ce qu'il a créé s'est fondu.	Всё нашим создано трудом.
En décrétant qu'on le lui rende,	Пора! Мы требуем возврата
Le peuple ne veut que son dû.	Того, что взято грабежом.[20]

In stanza 5, it is noteworthy that despite the fact that Stalin responded to strikes with bloodshed and repression (ROSSMAN 2005), a call to strike is still included in the translation. Admittedly, the monarchic context makes it clear that the strike is not directed against Soviet power. While the source text mentions violence against "nos propres généraux" ("our own generals"), Kots's translation, speaks simply of "assassins" ("убийцы").

"L'Internationale" by E. Pottier (1887)	**Russian translation by A. Kots (1937)**
Les Rois nous saoûlaient de fumées,	Довольно королям в угоду
Paix entre nous, guerre aux tyrans!	Дурманить нас в чаду войны!
Appliquons la grève aux armées,	Война тиранам! Мир Народу!
Crosse en l'air et rompons les rangs!	*Бастуйте*, армии сыны!
S'ils s'obstinent, ces cannibales,	Когда ж тираны нас заставят
À faire de nous des héros,	В бою геройски пасть за них —
Ils sauront bientôt que nos balles	*Убийцы*, в вас тогда направим
Sont pour *nos propres généraux*.[21]	Мы жерла пушек боевых![22]

world, / And our rights are but an empty sound! / We'll make our own lives in a different way — / And here is our battle cry: / *All power to the people of labour!* / And away with all the parasites!"

[20] Emphasis added. Translation into English from the Russian: "Contemptible you are in your wealth, / You kings of coal and steel! / You had your thrones, parasites, / At our backs erected. / All the factories, all the chambers – / All were made by our hands. / It's time! We demand the return / Of that which was stolen from us."

[21] Emphasis added.

[22] Translation from the Russian: "Enough of the will of kings / Stupefying us into the haze of war! / War to the tyrants! Peace to the people! / Go on strike, sons of the army! / And if the tyrants tell us / To fall heroically in battle for them — / Then, *murderers*, we will point / The muzzles of our cannons at you!"

In 1937, the anthem of the Soviet Union was also given a new musical twist: Shostakovich, who one year before had used "L'Internationale" for the movie soundtrack to the Soviet dramatic film *Girl Friends* (*Подруги*; TITUS 2016: 157–158), was ordered to arrange the music for a large symphonic orchestra with choir (KARABANOV 2015: 242). This version was played on the radio on festive occasions up until the Second World War.

The textual completion and musical reinvention of "L'Internationale" in Russia(n) should not be seen as an unequivocal promotion of the song. They contributed to the song's monumentalization, which in practice went hand in hand with the neutralization of its remaining revolutionary potential. Kots's translation was indeed consistent with the then-ongoing struggle against parasitism, and served as a fine propaganda tool to facilitate the replacement of the 1924 Constitution by the Stalin Constitution. At the same time, the song was becoming a problem that had to be taken care of. In the first place, this was due to Stalin's new understanding of Marxist doctrine.

While for Lenin communism in one country was unthinkable, Stalin proclaimed that the proletariat can and must build a socialist society in one country. In the course of the late 1920s, the theory of socialism in one country – the idea that socialism could be developed just in the Soviet Union, and that a world revolution was not a prerequisite – gradually became the ideological norm. In the early 1930s, it was adopted as Soviet state policy (Karabanov 2015: 238). From 1932, Stalin decided to curb the work of the Comintern, and liquidated its ranks and institutions. In the same period, Russian patriotism was again made negotiable, in the sense that the Soviet state system was presented as historically rooted in the Russian empire. In 1934, the concept of Soviet patriotism emerged – which had been completely impossible under Lenin.

Because by the end of the 1930s the new Soviet patriotism had penetrated Soviet musical culture (KARABANOV 2015: 240), "L'Internationale", in which not a trace of patriotism can be found, had become an old-fashioned song. In the late 1930s, it was deleted from the repertoire of the Red Army (KARABANOV 2015: 242) – a decision which may have been influenced by the fact that the song calls for an army strike. Yet, the song could not easily be discarded as the anthem of the Soviet Union: after all, the consecration of the song was a personal achievement of Lenin, who was the object of a personality cult.

During the so-called Great Patriotic War, "L'Internationale" was also a diplomatic problem. After the Nazi troops invaded Russia in 1941, Soviet radios started to broadcast the anthem of the Soviet Union, in Shostakovich's performance, to boost the troops' morale (KARABANOV 2015: 242). Churchill promptly declared his support for Russia through a discourse broadcast on the BBC. However, he was strongly opposed to playing the Soviet anthem. He even had sent word to the BBC that "the PM has issued the instruction to the Ministry of Information that "The Internationale" is *on no account* to be played by the B.B.C." (MINER 2003: 207). Instead, the British radio played the well-known Soviet song "Wide is My Motherland" ("Широка страна моя родная") by Isaak Dunayevsky (HERMISTON 2016: 116).

Churchill's speech paved the way for the alliance that was forged between the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union in late 1941– early 1942. During the

ceremonial parts of the diplomatic meetings that took place during the Second World War, national anthems were played. Stalin, who was keen to obtain the opening of a second front, did not want to upset his interlocutors by echoing an anthem calling for an international revolution with phrases such as "We will destroy this world of violence" (KARABANOV 2015: 245). In this context, in 1942, Stalin made his old comrade Kliment Voroshilov (who had some musical expertise) put together a committee to launch a competition for the creation of a new, now official state anthem (KARABANOV 2015: 243). By June 1943, the commission was in operation (ibid.: 243). In the first stage, a select group of renowned poets and composers, including Shostakovich, were asked to work out proposals. However, not a single song submitted was found suitable enough (ibid.: 244). Eventually, an open competition with attractive prize money was launched, attracting submissions from more than 170 candidate composers and 40 poets (ibid.: 249). The committee heard 223 anthems over the next six months. To settle the matter, Stalin personally interfered (ibid.: 247). In the end, Stalin's favourite tune, a composition by A. V. Aleksandrov, won the competition (ibid.: 261). The lyrics of the winning song were very Soviet-patriotic. The first two verses, written by Sergey Mikhalkov and El' Registan, read "Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics, / Great Russia has welded forever to stand" ("Союз нерушимый республик свободных / сплотила навеки Великая Русь"), rehabilitating Russia's imperialist past. What's more, the winning song also contributed to the personality cult of Lenin and of Stalin. The internationalist, anti-nationalist song that called for a global revolution against the establishment without personal heroism was to be replaced by a chauvinist song that affirmed the political status quo and personality cult of the ruler.

Kots's "L'Internationale" was last played on the Spasskaya Bashnya in December 1943 (DREYDEN 1981: 145). The Politburo adopted the new Soviet anthem as the official "state anthem" ("государственный гимн") of the Soviet Union, which was lauded as a logical decision in the Soviet newspapers (KARABANOV 2015: 248). As a result of its abolition as the anthem of the Soviet Union, Pottier's song was in danger of being forgotten in Russia. However, in 1944, the Soviet Union's Bolshevik party, later renamed KPSS, (re)adopted "L'Internationale" as its official party anthem (SHAPOCHKIN 2013: 134).

Because Arkadiy Kots had died of throat cancer in Sverdlovsk in 1943 during the Second World War – according to Dreyden (1988: 205), while he was working on new translations of Pottier – he had not experienced the degradation of his song himself. His name did not disappear from collective consciousness: in the post-war Stalin period, Kots received more recognition as a poet than he had received while alive. A milestone was the fact that in 1951 Shostakovich set one of his poems ("9 January", dedicated to Bloody Sunday), to music, along with nine other "Revolutionary Songs". For this composition, Shostakovich was awarded the Stalin Prize in the second grade the following year. Another posthumous tribute paid to Kots was the publication in 1957 in Moscow of his poetry collection *Poems (Стихотворения)*, which also included translations and memoirs.

The memory of Kots was kept alive until the end of the Soviet Union. In 1973, to mark the centennial of his birth, a commemorative plaque was placed on the façade of the former Mining Institute in Donetsk, where he had studied. In the exhibition room of

the same institute, some space was made for a biography of Kots. In 1986, Soviet printing presses printed a letter cover with Kots's image on it. A commemorative plaque was also mounted at the poet's last residence in Sverlovsk. According to testimonies, in the 1980s, people still made regular excursions to his grave. This status was primarily due to his merits as a translator of "L'Internationale", which until the end of the Soviet period was seen as the most famous song in the world (SIDOROVSKIY 1987: 5).

Reincarnation

With the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, the October Revolution, which was considered during the Soviet era to be the most important event in human history, was suddenly relegated to the periphery of Russian social consciousness (SIBIRYAKOV 2018: 17). Kots's "L'Internationale", which had been sung countless times to initiate and celebrate the Revolution, degenerated into a hopelessly outdated tune. Yet, the song was fished up by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation as a kind of relic and has kept it as its party anthem to the present day.

The translator, in turn, fell prey to oblivion. The memorial at his last home in Sverdlovsk, renamed as Yekaterinburg, disappeared in the 1990s. His grave no longer attracted visitors, and deteriorated to the point of becoming unrecognizable. Over the past fifteen years, however, there has been a renewed focus on the figure of Arkadiy Kots. In 2005, a new commemorative plaque appeared at the translator's last residence in Yekaterinburg. On 4 November 2008, a new, albeit very modest, monument was placed on Kots's grave, which had been re-identified in 2004. This initiative came not from the Russian authorities, who have no interest in the heroes of the socialist era (CHERNYAYEV 2023), but from local communists.

As the memory of Arkadiy Kots was neglected by the authorities of post-Soviet Russia, he could once again become of interest to counter-culture. Not surprisingly, his revolutionary potential was reactivated by activists on the utter left of the political spectrum. Today, Arkadiy Kots is not just a twentieth-century poet and translator, but also the name of a folk-punk, combat folk, and hard-core music group. "Arkadiy Kots" was created in 2010 by poet, translator and activist Kirill Medvedev (guitar, vocals), and sociologist and activist Oleg Zhuravlev (violin, keyboards, vocals). In the following years, the band was joined by artist and activist Nikolay Oleynikov (harmonica, percussion, vocals) and activist and sound engineer Anna Petrovitch (accordion, keyboards, vocals). The band has mutated many times and today records music and gives concerts as a ten-piece ensemble.

Kirill Medvedev, who with his group Arkadiy Kots has emerged as the bard of political activism, under Putin advocates the rehabilitation of the October Revolution as an "anti-war, anti-colonial, emancipatory and cultural project" (JOVOVICH 2021: 479). The choice of name should therefore come as no surprise. The band underscores the fact that in Kots's version, the song became the first official anthem of the Soviet Union. In or Facebook Messenger exchange on 8 March 2023, Kirill Medvedev explained the choice of name as follows:

We named it after him because our ambition from the beginning was to make anthems for the labour and protest movement, including translating and adapting such songs from other languages. Besides, we liked the fact that he combined creativity, activism and even science like us.[23]

The ambition to create songs and anthems for workers and protest movements has been realized by Arkadiy Kots on numerous occasions. For example, in 2015, they released their second long-player *Music for the Working Class* (figure 2), a collection of workers' movement songs. In 2018, their single "Boss Wants Me Workin' Till I Die" became the soundtrack to the massive rallies against the pension reforms in Russia. Another socialist song was released in 2021 under the title "Ten Nurses", in support of the social struggle waged by a medical union. The most famous song by Arkadiy Kots is, however, its Russian cover of "L'Estaca" by Luis Llach.

Figure 2: cover image of the CD *Music for the Working Class* (2015) by Arkadiy Kots[24]

[23] Original text: "Назвали в честь него потому что нашей амбицией изначально было делать гимны для рабочего и протестного движения, в том числе переводить и адаптировать такие песни с других языков. Кроме того, нам нравилось, что он как и мы совмещал творчество, активизм и даже науку."

[24] Work reproduced with permission of the Arkadiy Kots band. Retrieved from: https://arkadiy.bandcamp.com/album/music-for-the-working-class

Written in 1968 in Catalan, "L'Estaca" called for mass resistance against the Franco dictatorship. It has since become one of the most famous protest songs in the world. Although the song was initially meant as a support for the right to self-determination of Catalonia, it grew into a symbol of popular rebellion, in a large variety of languages. In 1978, after listening to a recording of "L'Estaca", the Polish singer/songwriter Jacek Kaczmarski created his own version. His Polish song "Mury" became the unofficial anthem of the Solidarność movement (HOFFMANN 2018). In 2010, during a wave of protests in Belarus, the Belarusian poet Andrei Khadanovich translated the Polish version into Belarusian. The Russian version created afterwards by Arkadiy Kots is said to be close to Llach's original. Still, there are interesting micro-textual shifts to be noted: in the Catalan song, injustice is symbolized by a stake. In the Russian-language version by Arkadiy Kots, this symbol is replaced by the more readily understandable symbol of long-decaying prison walls.

It is not farfetched to see "The Walls" by Arkadiy Kots (the band) as a kind of reincarnation of "L'Internationale" by Arkadiy Kots (the translator). The song indeed, has made a real contribution to the struggle against the current Russian regime. In 2011–2012, it became the musical symbol of the anti-Putin protests in Moscow. Arkadiy Kots performed it on Bolotnaya Square in 2012, and went viral. As Medvedev commented in our Facebook Messenger exchange on 8 March 2022: "when 'L'Estaca'/'Steny' (which is sometimes referred to as the new 'Internationale') in our translation became the anthem of the protests in the Russian Federation, we understood that we had chosen the name of the group correctly."[25] After the 2020 August elections in Belarus, the Russian-language version of "L'Estaca" was sung by protesters outside the Belarusian embassy in Moscow. During the following Belarusian protests, along with the Belarussian version, the Russian version of the song could also be heard in many streets in Belarus (GIBBONS & JÄRVINIEMI 2020).

By way of conclusion

In one of his last articles, Shostakovich called "L'Internationale" stronger than an armada of tanks and airplanes (DREYDEN 1988: 208). At the very least, this iconic song, coincidentally in the translation by Kots, has played a key role in Russian society, in shifting historical and political contexts. Before the Revolution, it was the object of *weaponization*, in the Early Soviet years, it was *consecrated*, and it became *monumentalized* under Stalin. Today, it is present in Russia as a relic of the past, as the anthem of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Since this party no longer strives towards a global revolution against capitalism, the revolutionary potential of Arkadiy Kots could appear to have been neutralized. At the same time, Kots's translation of '"L'Internationale"' has become an inspiration for continued protest and a struggle

[25] Original text: „[К]огда песня L;Estaca\Стены, (которую еще иногда назыают новым Интернационалом) в нашем переводе стала гимном протестов в РФ, мы поняли, что правильно назвали группу."

against oppression under his name. We seem to have come full circle, but it remains to be seen when the indignation of the Russian people, to which "Steny" adds fuel, will suffice to make the walls fall down.

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