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**Sounds of Power:
Music and the Personality Cults of Putin and Chávez**

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Index

Abstract.....	2
I.i. Theory of the Personality Cult.....	2
I.ii. Personality Cult of Putin.....	5
I.iii. Personality Cult of Chávez.....	8
I.iv. Justification for Comparison of Putin and Chávez.....	11
II.i. Textual Analysis of Songs for Putin.....	15
<i>“Takogo kak Putin”</i>	15
<i>“Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika”</i>	20
<i>Putin on “Golos”</i>	24
II.ii. Textual Analysis of Songs against Putin.....	25
<i>“Pesnia VDV”</i>	26
II.iii. Conclusions regarding Putin.....	30
II.iv. Textual Analysis of Songs for Chávez.....	31
<i>“Chávez Corazón del Pueblo”</i>	31
<i>“Chávez Seguirá Contigo”</i>	37
<i>“El Regreso del Amigo”</i>	42
II.v. Textual Analysis of Songs against Chávez.....	46
<i>“Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo”</i>	47
II.vi. Conclusions regarding Chávez.....	53
III.i. Comparison of Music Analysed for Putin and Chávez.....	55
III.ii. Conclusion.....	57
Appendices.....	63
<i>Appendix 1</i>	63
<i>Appendix 2</i>	63
<i>Appendix 3</i>	63
<i>Appendix 4</i>	64
<i>Appendix 5</i>	64
<i>Appendix 6</i>	64
Works Cited.....	65

Abstract

Music serves to both influence and express the attitudes and values of modern society. As such, it has become an important political tool in this era of personality-driven politics. This thesis focuses on the role of music in relation to the personality cults of two contemporary leaders, Vladimir Putin of Russia and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela.

In the first section, the essential aspects of the modern personality cult are defined and applied to Putin and Chávez, and the relevance of comparing Putin and Chávez is discussed. In the second section, the texts and performances of the most popular songs both for and against the leaders are analysed with respect to their cults of personality. In the third section, the results are examined with respect to each other and to the aspects of both personality cults outlined in section I, and a conceptual explanation of the results is proposed.

I.i. Theory of the Personality Cult

The first step in a practical examination of any personality cult is the theoretical definition of the same. One of the most concise, yet comprehensive definitions can be found in Jan Plamper's book *The Stalin Cult*. In it, he traces the modern personality cult back to Napoleon III, distilling its definition to five basic characteristics: mass politics, modern mass media, a closed society, secularism, and patricentralism.¹

¹ Jan Plamper, Introduction to *The Stalin Cult*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), xvii.

The first distinction Plamper draws between the modern personality cult and the earlier monarchical ones regards the scope of the cult, i.e. its intended audience. Prior to the rise of the modern personality cult, it was common practice in royal courts to create a certain cult of personality around the monarch, but it was always directed at a group of ruling elites, on whose support they relied. Beginning with Napoleon III, however, leaders began seeking support and legitimacy from the entire population, creating a new field of mass politics. According to Plamper, this shift from an exclusive focus on court politics to the broader scope of mass politics is a central component in the formation of a modern personality cult.²

In conjunction with mass politics, the introduction of modern mass media played a big role in permitting the rise of the modern personality cult. Advances in technology allowed for the mass dissemination of propaganda material, further supporting the rise of mass politics. In addition, thanks to mass education and mass conscription, the broad populace was now able to access a much broader range of media, in contrast to earlier times when only the elite would have the necessary education to do so. These factors also contributed to the popularization of new forms of media, such as written material, posters and films, which could now be mass-produced, disseminated and consumed.³

The third requisite for the rise and success of a personality cult is a closed society, as to make media-transmitted criticism of the leader cult or the introduction of a rival cult virtually impossible.⁴ Plamper also makes the point that, although open societies cannot by this definition give rise to personality cults, the techniques utilized by politicians in open societies are often

² Ibid., xvii.

³ Ibid., xvii.

⁴ Ibid., xvii.

very similar, which results in analogous, but still distinct, situations.⁵

The fourth requirement for a modern personality cult is secularism in politics. Prior to the French Revolution, Plamper states, political legitimacy, at least in the European world, was ultimately bestowed through God. (There are, however, several counterexamples to this claim.)⁶ This prevented the king's body from serving as a signifier for everything: at least symbolically, he had to share the throne with God. With the French Revolution, however, this changed, and purely secular forms of political legitimacy arose. It became possible to achieve political legitimacy through the will or approval of the people and, once God is removed from the equation, "the modern leader's body now absorbs all of the sacral aura and serves as metaphor for everything, for all of (homogenized) society."⁷ Within a system of popular sovereignty, a leader truly could achieve a God-like status, i.e. a personality cult.⁸

The final characteristic of a modern personality cult is patricentralism. Premodern cults often venerated female figures such as queens, tsaritsas and princesses, but with the introduction of popular sovereignty, this too changed. The logical effect of popular sovereignty as a path to political legitimacy was that the cult object had to represent the population granting the ruler legitimacy. As power was divided unequally according to gender, i.e. in favour of men, the leader had to embody the values and reality of the society he was to represent. As a result, Plamper concludes, the modern personality cult has focused solely on men.⁹ A possible

⁵ Ibid., xviii.

⁶ The Magna Carta in Britain, originally created 1215, limits the power of the king on popular grounds (i.e. popular sovereignty instead of divine right); Oliver Cromwell, born 1599, was heavily involved in a successful populist-religious rebellion in Britain, which eventually saw the king beheaded; in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, kings were elected and shared power with a parliament (*Sejm*) and senate (*senat*), beginning 1573.

⁷ Ibid., xvii.

⁸ N.B. This does not mean that society must be entirely secular, but that political power is regarded as being granted by the people rather than by God.

⁹ Ibid., xviii.

counterexample to this portion of Plamper's definition can be found in the case of Argentina's Eva Perón, who achieved enormous popularity despite her femininity. However, it could be argued that her constant public support of her husband placed her well within this rubric of patricentralism: for example, she told the women of her Peronist Women's Party that "to be a Peronist is, for a woman, to be loyal and to have blind confidence in Perón."¹⁰ This would require an amendment to the wording of Plamper's definition, so that the subject of a cult of personality be representative of a patriarchal society, rather than necessarily male himself.

I.ii. Personality Cult of Putin

Mass politics have been the norm in Russia at the very latest since World War I, as unprecedented numbers of ordinary citizens became involved in the national war efforts: men in the armed forces, and women in the workforce, filling the gaps left by the departing men. This created expectations of increased political participation once the war was over.¹¹ Stalin targeted the masses with great success, and Putin has continued the tradition, maintaining consistently high approval ratings.¹²

Mass media have been prevalent in Russia for some time as well, and with the advent of the internet, it became possible to spread information even more quickly. Internet penetration in Russia (people who can access the internet at home) is estimated to be at around 70% as of 2013, not factoring in the almost ubiquitous internet cafes. Television penetration is virtually complete, at 98.4% as of 2014, and about half of Russian households have a radio set (49.9%); in both

¹⁰ Linda B. Hall, "Evita Perón: Beauty, Resonance, and Heroism," in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 243

¹¹ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 9-10.

¹² "Approval of Putin," *Levada Center*, Web, URL: <http://www.levada.ru/eng/indexes-0>. January 30, 2015.

cases, almost everyone who has a TV or radio responded to the survey that they had used it in the past week (96.7% and 48.9% respectively).¹³

Regarding the requisite of a closed society, government control over mass media, particularly television, has been tightened considerably under Putin. According to the World Press Freedom Index, compiled and published annually by the international organization *Reporters Without Borders*, Russia ranked 148th out of 180 countries in 2014, a slight drop from 142nd in 2012.^{14,15} One example of this trend is the pressure put on *Dozhd' TV*, which gave airtime to opponents of Putin such as the punk-rock group Pussy Riot and opposition leader Aleksei Naval'nyi, culminating in the removal of the channel from the biggest cable operators, which cut its audience from 18 million to about 2 million.¹⁶ *Ekho Moskvy*, a Moscow-based radio station, has faced similar pressure, although along a different angle: Yuri Fedutinov, CEO since 1992, was replaced in 2014 by a former high-level manager in state media. This change was effected by *Gazprom Media*, part of the state-controlled *Gazprom* gas company, which owned 66% of voting shares. Current (and recently replaced) executives of *Ekho Moskvy* regard this and similar actions as an attack on their independence, and as a direct result of the radio station having given airtime to opponents of Putin.¹⁷ A third method Putin has employed to further his control of the media is reflected in the example of *RIA Novosti*, which was restructured without warning in 2013 and merged with the radio station *Voice of Russia* to form *Rossia Segodnia*.

¹³ "Contemporary Media Use in Russia," *GALLUP and Broadcasting Board of Governors*, February 2014, Web, URL: <http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2014/02/Russia-research-brief.pdf>. January 30, 2015.

¹⁴ "World Press Freedom Index 2012," *Reporters Without Borders*, Paris: Atelier 15, 2012.

¹⁵ "World Press Freedom Index 2014," *Reporters Without Borders*, Paris: Atelier 15, 2014.

¹⁶ Ksenia Galouchko and Henry Meyer, "Putin Tightens Control Over Media as Radio Targeted After TV," *Bloomberg*, February 18, 2014, Web. URL: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-02-18/putin-tightens-control-over-media-as-radio-targeted-after-tv>. January 30, 2015.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Although both were previously state-owned, *RIA Novosti* had a reputation for relatively broad and fair coverage: for example, it broadcast opposition leader Aleksei Navalny's trial live, covered the anti-Putin protests in 2012 and published articles seemingly sympathetic to the opposition. The new organization, on the other hand, was headed by Dmitry Kiselev, a former anchor on the official channel *Rossia 1*, who is well-known for his extreme anti-western and anti-gay views.¹⁸

The fourth requisite, political legitimacy through popular sovereignty as a result of the introduction of secularism in politics, was achieved in Russia with the abdication of the tsar in 1917. With the fall of the Tsardom, Russian rulers ceased to rule by divine right, and with the removal of God from the political sphere, the leader could now become a cult-like figure; in fact, the first long-term leader following the revolution, Stalin, succeeded in constructing such a cult around himself and around Lenin, his predecessor.¹⁹

Putin also fulfills Plamper's fifth and final rubric, namely patricentrism. It is worth noting the emphasis that has been placed on masculinity in constructing Putin's image. Going beyond physical gender, numerous photographs of Putin engaging in such masculine activities as big-game hunting, bare-chested horseback riding, judo, leading biker rallies, deep-sea exploration and fighting forest fires played a large role in cementing the patricentric aspect of Putin's image.²⁰ It is even possible to buy an action figure of Putin riding a bear.²¹ His wardrobe

¹⁸ Stephen Ennis, "Putin's RIA Novosti revamp prompts propaganda fears," *BBC Monitoring*, December 9, 2013, Web, URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25309139>. February 1, 2015.

¹⁹ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

²⁰ "Images of Putin's Masculinity," *REUTERS/RIA Novosti/KREMLIN*, February 5, 2014, Web, URL: <http://news.yahoo.com/photos/putin-s-images-of-masculinity-1391616189-slideshow/>. February 2, 2015.

²¹ "Статуэтка 'Путин на медведе,'" *Путин на медведе*, Web, Accessed April 7, 2015, URL: [путин-на-медведе.рф](http://putin-na-medvede.rf).

has also been carefully tailored to enhance his image, precisely fitting each occasion.²² Putin's cult of personality further reinforced the patricentric aspects of Russian society through its close alliance with the Russian Orthodox church, in particular its more conservative (and patricentric) elements.²³

I.iii. Personality Cult of Chávez

Venezuela has a long history of mass politics, going back at least to Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), who is known as the liberator of Venezuela, and can be argued to be the subject of a personality cult himself, at least post-mortem.²⁴ The importance of mass politics at the time can be illustrated by the following events from Bolívar's life. For one, upon his successful campaign of 1813, Bolívar had himself crowned with laurels and paraded through the streets of Caracas in a Roman-style triumphal chariot pulled by a dozen daughters of the city's patrician families.²⁵ Later, his own associates in the second Venezuelan republic accused him of organizing "an assembly or, in other and better words, a theatrical presentation" where he planted orators to call "spontaneously" for a Bolivarian dictatorship.²⁶ This tradition of mass politics continued on in Chávez, who held huge rallies in election campaigns and directed much of his attention towards attracting the support of the masses.²⁷

²² Katya Foreman, "Vladimir Putin's Alpha Male Apparel," *BBC Culture*, July 30, 2013, Web, URL: <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20130730-vladimir-putin-action-man>. February 2, 2015.

²³ Nadieszda Kizenko, "Russia's Orthodox Awakening," *Foreign Affairs*, September 17, 2013, Web, URL: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139936/nadieszda-kizenko/russias-orthodox-awakening>. February 2, 2015.

²⁴ John Chasteen, "Simón Bolívar: Man and Myth," in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 21-39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁷ "Mitin de Cierre de Campaña de Hugo Chavez en Caracas -Venezuela," Video, 2:01, October 4, 2012, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjCXW8IYrTE>. January 30, 2015.

Modern mass media is certainly also present in Venezuela, with the direct encouragement and support of Chávez. In May of 2000, for example, Chávez issued a decree underlining the importance of the internet in the development of the country.²⁸ While internet penetration is at only 55% as of 2013, it is growing quickly; on the other hand, television penetration in Venezuela was already at 98% in 2008.^{29,30} Chávez made good use of television, especially with his hit TV program “Aló, Presidente,” (“Hello, Mr. President”) which ran every Sunday from May 23, 1999 to January 29, 2012. Presented in the form of a live talk show, with Chávez as host, the show depicted what appeared to be the transparent and real-time workings of the government. According to official numbers, the vast majority of Venezuelans tuned in every week.³¹ The show gave Venezuelans “at least the appearance of contact with power, through his verbal and visual presence, which may be welcomed by people who have spent most of their lives being ignored.”³²

Media control and censorship in Venezuela increased significantly under Chávez. In the year of May 2012 - April 2013, *Freedom House* gave Venezuela’s internet a “Partly Free” rating, citing the blocking of political/social content, the arrests of bloggers/ICT users, and an overall press freedom status of “Not Free.”³³ From 2011, the first year *Freedom House* published

²⁸ Hugo Chávez Frías, *Decreto N° 825*, (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, May 22, 2000), URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20061001172317/http://www.cnti.gob.ve/cnti_docmgr/sharedfiles/decreto825.pdf. January 30, 2015.

²⁹ “Percentage of population using the internet in Venezuela from 2000 to 2013,” *Statista*, Web, URL: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/209115/number-of-internet-users-per-100-inhabitants-in-venezuela-since-2000/>. January 30, 2015.

³⁰ Fritz Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 183.

³¹ Dirección Aló Presidente, “‘Aló, Presidente’: ¡Cómo un Presidente cautivó una audiencia, oyendo pasar los años!,” *SiBCI*, March 18, 2012, Web, URL: <http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/historia/28/1633>. February 2, 2015.

³² Rachel Nolan, “The Realest Reality Show in the World,” *The New York Times*, May 4, 2012, Web, URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/magazine/hugo-chavez-totally-bizarre-talk-show.html?pagewanted=all>. February 2, 2015.

³³ “World Press Freedom Index 2013,” *Reporters Without Borders*, Paris: Atelier 15, 2013.

Internet Freedom rankings, to 2013, the year of Chávez's death, Venezuela's Freedom on the Net score steadily increased (i.e. became less free).³⁴ In the World Press Freedom Index, published annually by *Reporters Without Borders*, Venezuela was ranked 117th out of 179 countries worldwide in 2013, a significant drop from its rank of 77th out of 139 countries in 2002, three years after Chávez came to power. In 2006, the halfway point of Chávez's reign as president, Venezuela had already dropped to 114th out of 168 countries.³⁵

Venezuelan politics have long had a secular base, at least since the time of Simón Bolívar: the revolutionaries he led rebelled successfully against the Spanish monarchy, which ruled by divine right.³⁶ Thereafter, the will of the people, i.e. popular sovereignty, was the foundational value in granting political legitimacy to Venezuela's rulers. Chávez, who at times self-identified as Marxist, was also a strong proponent of democratic socialism, which by definition is founded on popular sovereignty.³⁷

In keeping with the long tradition of machismo in the Spanish-speaking world, Hugo Chávez was a man of action. His long military career (1971-1992), although ending in disgrace, marked him as a leader and a man of action. Later pictures of Chávez, taken throughout his political career, also frequently portray him as a warrior: saluting, shaking his fist, looking pensive but strong, and often in uniform.^{38, 39, 40} Chávez's image fit that of a macho archetype

³⁴2011: 46/100; 2012: 48/100; 2013: 53/100.

³⁵"World Press Freedom Index 2006," *Reporters Without Borders*, Paris: Atelier 15, 2006.

³⁶ John Chasteen, "Simón Bolívar: Man and Myth," in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 21-39.

³⁷ "Hugo Chavez Interview & Venezuela Review Full BBC HardTalk Special Report," Video, 29:53, July 14, 2013, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhtuQL4KRvk>. January 30, 2015.

³⁸ "Hugo Chavez," *Left Foot Forward*, Image, March 6, 2013, URL: <http://leftfootforward.org/images/2013/03/chavez3.jpg>. February 2, 2015.

³⁹ "Chávez," *Minuto al Día*, Image, August 2012, URL: <http://www.minutoaldia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Chávez.jpg>. February 2, 2015.

⁴⁰ "El Comandante," *PanAm Post*, Image, accessed February 2, 2015, URL: <http://panampost.com/wp-content/uploads/commandante.jpg>. February 2, 2015.

with which the Venezuelan population could identify.

I.iv. Justification for Comparison of Chávez and Putin

At first glance, Putin and Chávez seem to be quite different. One is Russian, the other Venezuelan; one leads a world power that, in the last 100 years, has been an empire, a superpower, and a G8 country, the other leads a mid-sized South-American country that has little global influence; one projects an aloof, tightly disciplined image, the other a gregarious, open-hearted one. The list goes on, but in spite of the many differences between Putin and Chávez, there are a number of essential similarities. Firstly, both were initially elected democratically and then gradually adopted more authoritarian policies. Secondly, both have enjoyed continued popular support throughout their time in power, disproportionately so from the less-affluent and less-educated strata of society. Thirdly, although they lived and ruled on opposite sides of the globe, both focused on a common enemy, namely the USA and its allies.

The first notable similarity is the democratic election of both leaders, followed by a shift towards authoritarianism. Russia's presidential election of 2000, in which Vladimir Putin came to power, was regarded as free and democratic by international electoral watch groups; for example, the *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE), one of the main observers of the 2000 elections, concluded in its final report that "the presidential election was conducted under a constitutional and legislative framework that is consistent with internationally recognized democratic standards."⁴¹ Since then, however, reports have become increasingly more critical, with the OSCE's final report on the presidential election of 2012 listing a litany of

⁴¹ "Russian Federation: Presidential Election 26 March 2000," *OSCE: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*, (Warsaw, May 19, 2000), p. 3, Web, URL: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/16275?download=true>. February 8, 2015.

issues, primarily regarding lack of fair media coverage (in favour of Putin), misuse of state resources and governmental authority to support Putin's campaign, and a number of procedural voting irregularities.⁴² Venezuela has followed a similar trajectory under Chávez. The *Polity Project*, an internationally-regarded political statistics bank which attempts to classify governments with an index ranging from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy), pegged Venezuela's political system at +8 in the 1998 elections that first brought Chávez to power. By the time of his second reelection in 2006, the rating had dropped to the lowest possible score for a democratic government, +6, and 6 years later, when Chávez won his fourth presidential term in 2012, that rating had sunk to -3 (closed anocracy).⁴³ There is another interesting parallel between the two leaders regarding presidential terms: when Chávez was elected in 1998 and Putin in 2000, both Venezuela and Russia had constitutional limits on presidential terms of four years, with a maximum of two terms served per president. During his time in power, Chávez extended the presidential term from four to six years and abolished limits on the number of terms a president could serve,⁴⁴ whereas Putin took a more circuitous route to the same end (in fitting with post-USSR Russian politics).⁴⁵ Having served the 2 permitted 4-year terms from 2000-2008, he took on the role of prime minister for four years (2008-2012) with Dmitry Medvedev as president, quite openly maintaining control of the government.⁴⁶

⁴² "Russian Federation: Presidential Election 4 March 2012," *OSCE: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*, (Warsaw, May 11, 2012), pp. 1-3, Web, URL: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/90461?download=true>. February 8, 2015.

⁴³ "Authority Trends, 1946-2013: Venezuela," *Polity Project (Center for Systemic Peace)*, (Vienna, VA, 2014), URL: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/ven2.htm>. February 8, 2015.

⁴⁴ Brian A. Nelson, "Hugo Chávez," *Enciclopædia Britannica*, Last updated March 4, 2013. URL: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/108140/Hugo-Chavez/285482/The-Chavez-presidency>. February 8, 2015.

⁴⁵ For more on the contemporary Russian political and media sphere see: Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

⁴⁶ Editors of *Enciclopædia Britannica*, "Vladimir Putin," *Enciclopædia Britannica*. Last updated July 20, 2014, Web, URL: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/484357/Vladimir-Putin>. February 8, 2015.

During this time, the Russian presidential term was changed from four to six years.⁴⁷ As the language of the Russian constitution allows the president to serve for two consecutive terms, Putin can potentially retain the presidency until 2024 without making any changes to the constitution.⁴⁸

The second similarity is that both have enjoyed fairly consistently high approval ratings, particularly from the less-affluent and less-educated demographic. The Levada Center's index of Putin's approval rating shows that it has not fallen below 61% since 2000, often even reaching above 80%.⁴⁹ Approval of government in the same timespan was significantly lower, varying from a low of 26% to an high of 66%, as was approval of the country's situation, which fluctuated between 28% and 64%.⁵⁰ It is a testament to the power Putin's cult of personality that his approval ratings have remained fairly independent from those of the government and the country he heads. Although Putin enjoys broad public support, he has historically been most popular with the less-educated and less-affluent segments of society.⁵¹ Chávez's popularity has followed similar trends, with certain differences. For one, the proportion of the support that Chávez received from the lower-income bracket was far higher. A Pew poll from spring of 2007 shows approval of Chávez among the lower-half income bracket at 12 points higher than in the upper half, and among respondents with a high school diploma or less 23 points higher than among those with at least some college education.⁵² With the exception of 2002, in which his

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ William Partlett, "The Constitutionality of Vladimir Putin's Third Term," *The Brookings Institution*, March 9, 2012, Web, URL: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/03/09-constitutionality-putin-partlett>. February 8, 2015.

⁴⁹ "Approval of Putin," *Levada Center*, Web, URL: <http://www.levada.ru/eng/indexes-0>. February 9, 2015.

⁵⁰ "Approval of Government," *Levada Center*, Web, URL: <http://www.levada.ru/eng/indexes-0>. February 9, 2015.

⁵¹ "Социально-демографические характеристики групп населения по отношению к В. Путину," *Фонд Общественное Мнение*, Web, February 9, 2015, URL: <http://fom.ru/posts/10946>. February 9, 2015.

⁵² Pew Research Center, "Venezuelans Rate Chávez's Leadership," *Pew Global Attitudes Survey, May 2007*, Web, URL: <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2009/02/1114-3a.gif>. February 9, 2015.

approval dipped to 31%, Chávez's popularity generally fluctuated between 50% and 75%, with a final rating of 62.5% upon his death.⁵³ As in the case of Putin, Chávez's personal approval rating remained largely independent of respondents' perception of the general state (i.e. situation) of Venezuela.⁵⁴

The third point of similarity between Chávez and Putin is their shared animosity towards the USA and its allies. In his essay on personality cults, George Wells writes that “when a society is threatened by an external foe, or thinks it is, the occasion often seems to produce a competent leader” and that “when the situation seems seriously threatening self-reliance vanishes and is replaced by loyalty and orthodoxy, as people look to a leader to save them.”⁵⁵ The reinforcement of this external threat and threatening situation has been a constant in the rhetoric and image-building of both leaders. Although they differ in the specifics of the threat (Putin protects his people from the fascists, such as the USA and the EU, while Chávez fights the imperialist powers, represented primarily by the USA), both agree on its intent: the destruction of their respective nations.^{56,57} The mutual enemy served to bring Chávez's Venezuela and Putin's Russia closer together.⁵⁸ In both cases, this heightened threat perception combined with the presentation of Putin and Chávez as the only viable saviours has played a central role in building

⁵³ “Histórico evaluación de gestión de HChF,” *Datanalisis*, March 2012, Web, URL: <https://app.box.com/s/bd5438143f9d4d19089a>, p. 15. February 9, 2015.

⁵⁴ “Situación país vs. situación personal,” *Datanalisis*, March 2012, Web, URL: <https://app.box.com/s/bd5438143f9d4d19089a>, p. 21. February 9, 2015.

⁵⁵ George A. Wells, “Cults of Personality,” *Think*, (vol. 13, issue 37, June 2014), pp. 16 - 17.

⁵⁶ “Путин готов защищать Украинцев от фашистов,” Video, 01:28, May 14, 2014, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jP_Ut5j-bYc;

“Путин вновь поставил США на место,” Video, 10:13, October 25, 2014, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9XWZq9kZ58>. February 9, 2015.

⁵⁷ “Hugo Chávez contra el imperialismo,” Video, 52:04, June 11, 2012, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yapFk8Cxxa4>.

⁵⁸ Виктор Васильев, “Путин: Чавес был близким другом России,” *Голос Америки*, March 6, 2013. URL: <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/chavez-death-russia-reaction/1616111.html>. February 9, 2015.

and maintaining their cults of personality.

II.i. Songs Supporting Putin's Cult of Personality

The texts and presentation of three songs promoting Putin's Cult of personality are analysed in this section: "Takogo kak Putin," "Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika," and a video showing Putin singing "Blueberry Hill" on the TV show "Golos." The text, provided in Russian with a literal translation to English by the paper's author, precedes each analysis. Each song illustrates a different viewpoint on Putin's personality cult, but taken together they also share certain similarities, which will be discussed in Section II.iii..

"Takogo kak Putin"

Такого как Путин	A Man Like Putin
<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 Мой парень снова влип в дурные дела, 2 Подрался, наглотался какой-то мути. 3 Он так меня достал, и я его прогнала. 4 И я хочу теперь такого, как Путин.</p> <p>Chorus:</p> <p>5 Такого, как Путин, полного сил, 6 Такого, как Путин, чтобы не пил. 7 Такого, как Путин чтоб не обижал, 8 Такого, как Путин, чтоб не убежал.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>9 Я видела его вчера в новостях,</p>	<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 My boyfriend got into trouble again, 2 Got into a fight, and caused some sort of mischief. 3 I got so sick of him that I dumped him.⁵⁹ 4 And now, I want a man like Putin.</p> <p>Chorus:</p> <p>5 A man like Putin, full of strength, 6 A man like Putin, so he won't drink. 7 A man like Putin, so he won't mistreat me, 8 A man like Putin, so he won't run away.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>9 I saw him yesterday on the news,</p>

⁵⁹ *lit.* "I chased him off"

<p>10 Он говорил о том, что мир на распутье. 11 С таким, как он, легко и дома, и в гостях, 12 И я хочу теперь такого, как Путин.</p> <p>Chorus, 4 times.</p>	<p>10 He talked about how the world is at a crossroads. 11 With a man like him, it's easy both at home and away,⁶⁰ 12 And now, I want a man like Putin.</p> <p>Chorus, 4 times.</p>
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Analysis

The most popular song supporting Putin's personality cult is titled "Takogo kak Putin," which can be translated as "One like Putin." Although it was written in 2003, it did not achieve its extraordinary popularity until late 2007 or early 2008. As of February 14, 2015, the top seven videos of the song had been viewed over 10.2 million times on Youtube.⁶¹

The author, Aleksandr Elin, is also known for writing another pro-Putin song, "My Delegate" ("Мой депутат") in 2004. Later, it appears that his views shifted, as he wrote two quite successful songs in 2011 and 2012 protesting Putin's political system. At the time that the song of praise was initially written, the government claimed to have had nothing to do with the song.⁶² However, its producer, Nikolai Gastello, had a strong connection to the Kremlin as former press secretary of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, rendering such a claim unlikely.⁶³ In any case, it is improbable that the sudden surge in popularity of the song four years later, just before the 2008 federal elections, which Putin's proxy candidate Dmitry Medvedev

⁶⁰ *lit.* "at home and as guests."

⁶¹ Appendix 1.

⁶² Борис Галкин, "Флаг в руки," *Профиль*, (vol. 22, issue 389, June 14 2014), Web. URL: <http://web.archive.org/web/20040826144054/http://www.profile.ru/items/?item=9400>. February 18, 2015.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; "Судебные страсти по водительскому удостоверению," *Юристлиб*, (Book 583, 1998). Web. URL: http://www.juristlib.ru/book_583.html. February 18, 2015.

won, was spontaneous and independent of the Kremlin's PR department, especially considering the extent of Putin's control over Russian media.

The song is fairly simple, sung from the perspective of a young woman unlucky in love. Although "Takogo kak Putin" is not lyrically complex (two verses and a chorus that repeats five times), an analysis of the lyrics reveals much regarding Putin's personality cult.

The first verse begins with a complaint that the speaker's boyfriend got into trouble again, which made her so angry that she chased him away. Now, she concludes the verse, "I want [a man] like Putin."⁶⁴ This verse serves to both obfuscate and introduce the real topic of the song; although it begins in the vein of a classic you-done-me-wrong song, only the first two lines actually deal with the bad boyfriend. The third already dismisses him, and starting with the fourth line, the rest of the song is dedicated to Putin.

In the second verse, the narrator describes how yesterday she saw Putin on the news, talking about the world being at a crossroads. Then she imagines that with a man like him, it would be easy both at home and away, concluding, as in the first verse, that now she wants a man like Putin.⁶⁵ The portrayal of politics in this verse is particularly noteworthy. Firstly, seeing Putin on TV, and secondly, being presented with a decision. This relates to two central aspects of Putin's personality cult discussed in Section I, namely TV news as Putin's chosen medium for forming the opinions of the Russian people, and the choice between Putin the saviour and the evil West/EU/US/CIA. Immediately after these lines, however, the narrator makes the abrupt, almost absurd jump to fantasizing about home life with Putin. When sung, the lines flow together beautifully, falling perfectly into the rhythm and rhyme scheme, so that only upon reflection on

⁶⁴ Line 4.

⁶⁵ Lines 9-12.

the actual lyrics does the incongruity of the themes become obvious. However, as discussed above, the verse makes perfect sense in the context of Putin's personality cult. The seamless transition further conditions listeners to make the choice for Putin automatically, almost subconsciously, which connects personal life and politics even more closely. The political message of line 11 ("With someone like him, it is easy at home and away") is clear: choose Putin for a stable, easy life; Putin offers a strong and steady guiding hand both at home and abroad, domestically and inter-nationally.⁶⁶

As the chorus is repeated five times, it could be seen as the most significant part of the song. It reads as a list of the advantage of (a man like) Putin: he is full of strength; not a drunk; and the singer can trust him not to mistreat or leave her.⁶⁷ In essence, "Takogo kak Putin" is a love song to the strong, stable man, both father-figure and lover.

Peter Pomerantsev further discusses this conflation of the political and personal in his book *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*.⁶⁸ In discussion of "a generation of orphaned, high-heeled girls" he quotes one of them as saying: "The creatives. The analysts. We're not interested in those. The ones we want are 'the possessors' [...] a man behind whom you feel like behind a wall of stone." "Of course it's the President that encapsulates this image," writes Pomerantsev. Putin presents himself as "the ultimate sugar daddy, the ultimate protector with whom you can be as 'behind a stone wall.'" ⁶⁹

The video that originally caused the song to go viral, uploaded in January of 2008, has received over 5.2 million views. It is shot in amateur style, featuring two young women singing

⁶⁶ Line 11.

⁶⁷ Lines 5-8.

⁶⁸ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

and dancing suggestively in their living rooms and various footage and images of Putin which underline his masculinity and power (e.g. Putin in a Judo uniform; in the cockpit of a fighter jet; walking a horse and dog).⁷⁰ This connects directly to the macho aspect of Putin's cult of personality, as well as to his presentation in the song's lyrics and by Pomerantsev as "the ultimate sugar daddy."⁷¹

Another popular video is a performance of the song by Russian pop star Natali in the 2008 *Superstar* competition. She and her dancers are dressed in (sexualized) Soviet-style costumes, and the set is built up on the same theme, in fitting with nostalgia for the USSR which Putin has vigorously fanned, most famously through his comment that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century.⁷² In contrast to their worker's suits, however, they are wearing high-heels. This could just be a component of the sexualization of the costume, but could also be seen as a metaphor for the new Russia Putin is building up around himself: Soviet-style looks and structure, components of modernity, and modern Russian-style capitalism, all singing his glory.

⁷⁰ "В.В. Путин в компании двух девушек," Video, 1:15, 1:23, 1:27, January 20, 2008, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kfImlm4S9g>. February 18, 2015.

⁷¹ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), p. 13.

⁷² "Владимир Путин: Распад советского союза - крупнейшая геополитическая катастрофа века," *Регнум*, April 25, 2005, Web, URL: <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/444083.html>. February 18, 2015.

“Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika”

Песня российского чиновника	Song of a Russian Bureaucrat
1 Произошел в моей жизни быстрый карьерный рост, 2 Я занимаю в России очень высокий пост, 3 Мимо меня протекает денег огромный поток, 4 И иногда я себе позволяю из потока сделать глоток	1 In my life there occurred a fast rise up the career ladder, 2 I hold a very high position in Russia, 3 A huge stream of money runs by me, 4 And sometimes I allow myself to take a sip from the stream.
5 Есть у меня самолеты, яхты и острова, 6 И в жизни одна забота -- Родину распродавать. 7 Навек обеспечены дети, пристроена вся родня, 8 Но есть один человек на свете, который пугает меня	5 I have airplanes, yachts and islands, 6 And one concern in life: to sell out the Homeland. 7 The children are [financially] secure forever, the whole family set up [for life], 8 But there is one person on earth who frightens me.
9 Когда в стране наступает очередной трындец, 10 Таких как я вызывает он в свой мрачный дворец, 11 И, крепко сжав ягодицы, мы слушаем строгую речь, 12 И ждем напряженно кого покарает сегодня Домоклов меч	9 When yet another disaster happens in this country, 10 It calls out those like me to its dark palace, 11 And, strongly squeezing [our] butts, we listen to a strict speech, 12 And wait intently [to see] whom Damocles’s sword will punish today.
13 Путин страшный, очень страшный, я его боюсь, 14 Я почти привык, но каждый раз в штаны мочусь, 15 Я вагонами ворую, как пчела тружусь, 16 И при этом все сильнее Путина боюсь!	13 Putin’s scary, very scary, I’m afraid of him, 14 I’m almost used to it, but every time I wet my pants, 15 I thieve by the wagon-load and toil like a bee, 16 And with this I fear Putin ever more!

<p>17 Стараюсь на совещаньях сидеть я с таким лицом, 18 Как будто все эти годы был в церкви святым отцом, 19 Мой взгляд выражает смирение, я словно в раю херувим, 20 И правой рукой прикрываю на левой часы Вашерон Константин</p> <p>21 Но кажется мне, не клюёт он больше на этот развод, 22 Мне кажется, он что-то знает, или узнает вот-вот, 23 Ко мне он во сне приходит с бензопилой по ночам 24 И шепчет «Верни свои деньги учителям и врачам.»</p> <p>25 Путин страшный, очень страшный, я его боюсь, 26 В мой пентхаус трехэтажный заселилась грусть, 27 Я на яхте кокаином вывел слово Русь, 28 Но и Русь вдохнув всей грудью, Путина боюсь!</p> <p>29 В испуганном состоянии живу уже много лет, 30 Я жду каждый день наказания, а наказания всё нет, 31 Я жду его в Куршавеле и на Мальдивах жду, 32 Я жду его в Средиземном море с яхты справляя нужду.</p>	<p>17 I try to sit in conferences with a face that looks 18 As though I had been a holy father in the church all these years, 19 My look expresses humility, I'm like a cherub in heaven, 20 And with the right hand I cover the Vacheron Constantin watch on the left.</p> <p>21 But it seems to me that he's no longer falling for this scam, 22 It seems to me that he knows something, or will find out very soon, 23 He comes to me in my dreams with a chainsaw 24 And whispers "Return your money to the teachers and doctors."</p> <p>25 Putin's scary, very scary, I'm afraid of him, 26 In my three-storey penthouse melancholy has set in, 27 On the yacht I wrote out the word Rus' with cocaine, 28 But having inhaled the Rus' deeply, I'm afraid of Putin.</p> <p>29 I've been living in a frightened state for many years already, 30 I expect punishment every day, but no punishment comes, 31 I expect it in Kurshavel⁷³ and in the Maldives, 32 I expect it on the Mediterranean Sea peeing off the yacht.</p>
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⁷³ Resort town in Crimea.

<p>33 Охваченный диким страхом я весь погряз в грабеже, 34 Краду я с таким размахом, что даже стыдно уже, 35 Вот раньше я крал осторожно, а щас обнаглел совсем, 36 И не заметить уже невозможно моих двух ходовых схем,</p> <p>37 В стране объявлена, вроде, борьба с такими как я, 38 Но я еще на свободе, и здесь же мои друзья. 39 Где логика я не вижу, над этой загадкой бьюсь, 40 Ведь я же так всю Россию спизжу, пока я его боюсь.</p>	<p>33 Flooded by wild fear, I am fixated on plundering, 34 I steal on such a scale that it's even already embarrassing, 35 I used to steal carefully, but now I've become completely brazen, 36 And not to notice my two successful cons is already impossible,</p> <p>37 In this country there is declared, kind of, a fight with such as I, 38 But I am still free, and, after all, my friends are here. 39 Where I don't see logic, I wrestle with this mystery, 40 In the end, I'm plundering all of Russia, while I fear him.</p>
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Analysis

Although there are no songs about Putin on Youtube that have near the 10.2 million views that “Takogo kak Putin” has, there is one with over 3.8 million views: “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika” (“Song of a Russian Bureaucrat”) from Semion Slepakov’s show on TNT network’s Comedy Club, performed 2013.⁷⁴ While it is possible that the song was intended to be a satire of Putin’s image, since it was performed on a comedy show, it seems unlikely in the larger scope of Selpakov’s material; regardless of intent, the majority of listeners would take the song at face value, as analysed below. It is sung from the point of view of a very successful Russian bureaucrat who has risen to become an oligarch. The song is lyrically very complex, with ten distinct verses and no repeated chorus.

⁷⁴ “Семён Слепаков: Песня российского чиновника,” Video, 4:41, April 12, 2013, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXz0iG82jOo>. February 18, 2015.

The first verse describes how the bureaucrat became wealthy through theft. The second verse lists his assets, but ends by saying that “there is one person on earth who frightens me,” referring to Putin.⁷⁵ The third verse blames the country’s corruption on a bad situation, serving to insulate Putin from blame, which is important to set up the rest of the song, in particular verses four and six, discussed below.⁷⁶

The fourth verse is marked by a musical climax and its melody is played as the introduction, and repeated again at the end of the song, suggesting particular importance. It goes “Putin is scary, very scary, I’m afraid of him, / I’m almost used to it, but I wet my pants every time, / I steal by the wagon-load and toil like a bee, / and with this I fear Putin ever more!”⁷⁷ It at once both underlines Putin’s strength and power, and places him above the political fray and corruption. This relates back to the old Russian idea of the Tsar’-batiushka, the “dear father tsar,” with the belief that the tsar is the ultimate source of earthly justice, and if he only knew of all the bad things going on, he would put a stop to them.⁷⁸ Here, Putin is positioned in much the same role. The major practical difference is that the tsars maintained this myth through strict control of information, whereas Putin, in the age of information freedom due to the internet, has resorted to spreading massive misinformation instead.^{79,80}

The sixth verse expands on Putin’s role as a modern Tsar’-batiushka. For Putin not to know about the corruption in Russia’s system, he would have to be absurdly clueless, distant, or powerless, any of which would necessarily detract from his cult of personality. To prevent this,

⁷⁵ Lines 5-8.

⁷⁶ Lines 1-12.

⁷⁷ Lines 13-16.

⁷⁸ Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁷⁹ “Putin’s Disinformation Matrix,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 2014, Web, URL: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/putins-disinformation-matrix-1416009418>. February 18, 2015.

⁸⁰ Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

Slepakov provides an explanation for Putin's initial ignorance of the issue and immediately introduces the hope that he will soon deal with it in the line "It seems to me that he knows something [about the corruption], or is about to find out."⁸¹ The next two lines show him already having a positive effect: "He comes to me in my dreams at night with a chainsaw / and whispers 'Return your money to the teachers and doctors,'" reveals the bureaucrat.⁸² Here, Putin is represented as the conscience of the country, frightening the evil into doing the right thing for the good, average citizen, such as the teachers and doctors. However, this kind of imagery relies on and implicitly promotes an omnipresent subject, in this case Putin. The more omnipresent Putin becomes in the minds of Russians, the more control he can exert through his cult of personality. Stalin created a similar omnipresence for himself, primarily through his portrait.⁸³

Putin on *Golos*

In 2010, Putin appeared singing the jazz standard "Blueberry Hill" at a charity event. The video, shown on TV and posted on *Youtube*, became an instant hit. The video alone that *Russia Today*, the Kremlin's main English-language news channel, posted on Youtube has garnered almost 4.5 million views.⁸⁴ It truly became a cultural phenomenon, however, when it was reworked to appear as though Putin had performed the song on the TV show *Golos* ("The Voice"), on which aspiring singers compete to have judges turn around to face them in approval of their performance.⁸⁵ The top six versions of the video (i.e. clips of the same TV broadcast

⁸¹ Line 22.

⁸² Lines 23-24.

⁸³ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

⁸⁴ As of February 18, 2015. "Singing PM: 'Fats' Putin over the top of 'Blueberry Hill' with piano solo," Video, 4:29, December 11, 2010, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aVIR_Oe3v0.

⁸⁵ "Шоу голос," *Дом 2 на ТНТ*, n.d., URL: http://dom2-na-tnt.ru/video/tag/shou_golos. February 18, 2015.

posted from multiple accounts) have a cumulative 10.9 million views as of February 16, 2015.⁸⁶ The video, put together by *Vechernii Urgant*, a popular Russian late night talk show, is relevant to the analysis presented in this thesis as a musical expression of the social climate created by Putin's personality cult.⁸⁷

The key here is to be found in the reactions of the judges as they turn around and realize who the performer is. They display the range of behaviour expected by the personality cult as described in this paper. The lone female judge makes an overt display of pleased surprise, entirely losing her composure; then she is shown visibly enchanted, seems to be almost at the point of swooning, and ends up the adoring fan.⁸⁸ As the second judge turns his chair around, he gets up to walk towards the singer, but upon realizing that it is Putin, he stops abruptly, turns back, and sits down in a display of submission to the alpha male.⁸⁹ The third judge to turn around demonstrates quiet amazement and adoration, though more reserved than the female judge.⁹⁰

The video expresses Putin's personality cult and was produced to fit the current societal perception of him. In addition, it serves as a demonstration of the proper response to Putin through the reactions of the judges.

II.ii. Songs against Putin

Although there are a number of songs against Putin to be found on the internet, only two achieved significant popularity: "Pesnia VDV" ("Song of the VDV"), by two former members of

⁸⁶ Appendix 2.

⁸⁷ "Владимир Путин спел в шоу 'Голос,'" *Style*, September 7, 2013, Web, URL: <http://style.news.am/rus/news/7460/vladimir-putin-spel-v-shou-golos.html>. February 18, 2015.

⁸⁸ "Вечерний Ургант. Путин выбирает судей на шоу 'Голос,'" Video, 1:26, September 6, 2013, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTqVcs4pLjk>. February 18, 2015. 0:50, 1:00, 1:16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:06.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:15.

the Russian VDV special forces group; and “Blagorodnitsa, Putina ugoni,” (“Holy Virgin, Chase Putin Away”), by the punk-rock group Pussy Riot. Since the former achieved demonstrable popularity within Russia, as it was performed at a number of large rallies in Moscow,⁹¹ and the latter did not, likely owing its popularity more to infamy and controversy than influence over Russian people, this analysis focuses on the former.

“Pesnia VDV”

Песня ВДВ	Song of the VDV⁹²
<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 Если ты гражданин, если ты президент, 2 Для тебя есть закон, для тебя есть запрет. 3 Из казны не воруй, и не лги никогда, 4 Будь открытым для всех, отвечай за слова. 5 Восемь лет президент и опять кандидат, 6 Посмотри нам в глаза и закрой свой мандат. 7 Доверяли тебе, а ты врал много лет, 8 Применяя во всём свой ГБшный секрет</p>	<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 If you are a citizen, if you are president, 2 There are laws for you, there are things forbidden to you, 3 Don't steal from the treasury, and don't ever lie, 4 Be open towards all, answer for your words. 5 Eight years as president and a candidate again, 6 Look into our eyes and end your mandate. 7 We trusted you, and you lied for many years, 8 In everything maintaining secrecy in the name of Nations Security.</p>
<p>Chorus:</p> <p>9 Ты такой же, как я - человек, а не бог, 10 Я такой же, как ты - человек, а не лох. 11 Не дадим больше врать, не дадим</p>	<p>Chorus:</p> <p>9 You're just like me, a person, and not God, 10 I'm just like you, a person, and not a dupe. 11 We won't allow more lying, we won't</p>

⁹¹ Mansur Mirovalev, “Russia Protest Song: Veterans Rock Anti-Putin Rally With A Catchy Tune,” *Huffington Post*, February 5, 2012, Web, URL: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/05/russia-protest-song-veterans_n_1255684.html.

⁹² Russian paratroopers/naval special forces.

<p>воровать, 12 Мы Свободы десант, с нами родина мать. 13 Ты обычный чиновник, не царь и не бог, 14 Для тебя человек - тупой бандерлог. 15 Цвет ленты Свободы для всех позитив 16 И лишь для тебя - презерватив.</p> <p>Verse 2: 17 Я смотрю на тебя, на портреты твои, 18 Ты нам врѣшь до сих пор, как медведи твои. 19 Мы устали смотреть на позор всей страны, 20 С нищетой деревень рядом замки твои. 21 Разхвалил оборонку и армию сдал, 22 На солдат положил, офицеров послал. 23 Мы тебе не простим все заслуги твои, 24 Мы требуем мира, тиран - уходи!</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Verse 3: 25 Вспомни наших дедов, воевавших с СС, 26 Вспомни наших гвардейцев сошедших с небес, 27 В нашем сердце остались Берлин и</p>	<p>allow stealing, 12 We're Freedom's assault troops, the motherland is with us. 13 You're an ordinary bureaucrat, not the tsar and not God, 14 To you a person is a dense Bandar-log.⁹³ 15 The colour of the ribbons of Freedom is positive for all, 16 And only to you [is it] a condom.⁹⁴</p> <p>Verse 2: 17 I look at you, at your portraits, 18 You're lying to us up to this moment, like your bears. 19 We're tired of looking at the shame of the whole country, 20 With the villages' poverty next to your castles. 21 You talked up the department of defense and betrayed the army, 22 You didn't give [a shit] about the soldier, and sent the officers [to hell],⁹⁵ 23 We won't forgive you all your merits, 24 We demand peace, tyrant - leave!</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Verse 3: 25 Remember our grandfathers, who fought the SS, 26 Remember our guards who descended from the heavens,</p>
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⁹³ A type of monkey from Rudyard Kipling's *A Jungle Book*, known for chattering foolishly.

⁹⁴ A reference to a comment by Putin comparing the protesters' white ribbons to condoms.

⁹⁵ The swear word хуй, *penis*, here is left out in Russian both times, but clearly implied.

<p>Афган, 28 Ну а сердце ЕдРосов - личный карман. 29 Нынче честь не в почете, достоинства нет, 30 Есть только системный отблеск монет. 31 Машины и тряпки, глобальный вещизм, 32 Это прогнившей системы цинизм.</p> <p>Verse 4: 33 Забыли культуру, а в школах ЕГЭ, 34 Дипломы за деньги, и взятки везде. 35 Лечиться бесплатно не может старик, 36 Это прогнившей системы тупик.</p> <p>Chorus</p>	<p>27 Berlin and Afghanistan remained in our heart, 28 But the heart of the corrupt deputies is a personal pocket. 29 These days, honour is no virtue and there is no dignity, 30 There is only the systemic glittering of coins. 31 Cars and pushovers, global consumerism, 32 This is the cynicism of the rotten system.</p> <p>Verse 4: 33 We've forgotten [our] culture, and the Unified National Exam in the schools, 34 [You can get] diplomas for money, and there are bribes everywhere. 35 A senior can't get medical help for free, 36 This is the dead end of the rotten system.</p> <p>Chorus</p>
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Analysis

One of the first popular anti-Putin songs came out of the protests linked to Putin's refusal to stand down after two terms served as president, as he ran for president again in 2012.⁹⁶ Most notably, this song was written and performed by two members of the VDV, Russia's elite paratrooper squadron. A remarkably polished and catchy song, it covers the main complaints many Russians had regarding their country's political system; they are broadly similar to the ones voiced in Slepakov's song, with the difference that in this case, Putin is held accountable.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The issue is made explicit in the opening lines of the song: "eight years president and [now you're] a candidate again." Line 5..

⁹⁷ "Путин и ВДВшники," Video, 4:12, January 26, 2012, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aVIR_Oe3v0. February 18, 2015.

It begins with the lines “If you are a citizen, if you are president, there are laws for you [to follow], there are prohibitions for you.”⁹⁸ This sets the tone for the song, voicing the main grievance, namely that Putin acted as though he were above the law, particularly in running for a third term. Although there were various Russian intellectuals in the second half of the 19th century who opposed tsarism in favour of populism, such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii, there is little evidence of open criticism of the institution of the tsar before then, as any attempt to publish such material would have been immediately and strictly repressed.⁹⁹ Thus, in Russian political tradition, the tsar was God-like, with unlimited and irrevocable power.¹⁰⁰ As mentioned in the analysis of “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika,” Putin’s personality cult seems to be endowing him with these attributes of the tsar. This is simultaneously acknowledged and rejected in the chorus: “You’re just like me - a person, and not a god / I’m just like you - a person, and not a dupe / [...] / You’re an ordinary bureaucrat, not the tsar and not God.”¹⁰¹ A secondary characteristic of Putin’s personality cult, connected with this view of the tsar, seems to be the intention of rendering the Russian people hope- or helpless: rather than attempting to solve their own problems, they should just trust in Putin to do so, as he is portrayed as doing in the media (e.g. fighting forest fires or corruption). This song rejects that, as the narrator decidedly takes an active role. Instead of giving up or hoping for the tsar or Putin to save them from the corrupt system, he says: “We won’t let you lie anymore, we won’t let you steal.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Lines 1-2.

⁹⁹ David MacKenzie, Michael W. Curran. *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond* (5th edition, Belmont, Calif., 1999), 348-352.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

¹⁰¹ Lines 9-10, 13.

¹⁰² Line 11.

The second verse begins: “I look at you, at your portraits, / you’re lying to us up to this moment, like your bears” (the “bears” are a probable reference to Dmitri Medvedev, who was Putin’s puppet president from 2008 to 2012 [*Medved*’ translates as *bear*]; it could also be referring to the bear as a symbol of masculinity in Putin’s cult of personality [e.g. Putin riding a bear], implying that the macho image constructed around Putin is a lie)¹⁰³ and then attacks the kleptocratic aspect of Putin’s regime: “We’re tired of looking at the shame of the whole country, / With the villages’ poverty next to your castles.”¹⁰⁴ This also becomes a subversion of Putin’s ever more ubiquitous image, as looking at Putin is implicitly equated with looking at the country’s shame, and so the portraits become a reminder of the negative aspects of Putin’s personality cult as well.

II.iii. Conclusions regarding Putin

There are a few themes common to the three instances of music promoting Putin’s personality cult analysed above.

The first is the portrayal of Putin as the ultimate macho. In “Takogo kak Putin,” this theme is approached from the perspective of a young woman looking for love. In “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika,” it is Putin’s alpha-male dominance over the corrupt government officials that takes centre stage. In the video of Putin on “Golos,” both of these are combined: the behaviour of the female judge encapsulates the message of “Takogo kak Putin,” and that of the first male judge to turn around portrays the themes explored in “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinkovnika.”

¹⁰³ Lines 17-18.

¹⁰⁴ Lines 19-20.

The second is the positioning of Putin in the role of the tsar. While the connection to the image of the Tsar’-batiushka is made most explicit in “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika,” the representation of Putin as the ideal man in “Takogo kak Putin” and the deference shown to him in the video from “Golos” fall into the same pattern. “Pesnia VDV” acknowledges this comparison as well, reminding Putin that he is not the tsar, so as to be above the law.

II.iv. Songs For Chávez

Of the songs promoting Chávez, three stand out in particular. The first, “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo,” was written during Chávez’s presidency; the other two, “Chávez Seguirá Contigo” and “El Regreso del Amigo,” were written immediately upon his death.

“Chávez Corazón del Pueblo”

“Chávez Corazón del Pueblo”	“Chávez, Heart of the People”
<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 Sí, podemos ayudar al mundo, 2 Cambiar la historia en un segundo, 3 Si ayudas, se hará crecer.</p> <p>4 Tu corazón es bueno. 5 Tu corazón es bueno.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>6 Si, eres un líder de la vida, 7 Cambiar el mundo es alegría, 8 Está de moda hacer el bien.</p> <p>9 Tu corazón es bueno. 10 Tu corazón es bueno.</p>	<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 Yes, we can help the world, 2 Change history in a second, 3 If you help, it will grow.</p> <p>4 Your heart is good. 5 Your heart is good.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>6 Yes, you are a leader of life, 7 Changing the world is a joy, 8 It’s in fashion to do good.</p> <p>9 Your heart is good. 10 Your heart is good.</p>

Verse 3:

11 Yo no soy Dios para decirte que hacer,
12 Yo lo que sé es que juntos vamos a vencer,
13 Y vamos a salvar al mundo.

Chorus 1:

14 Vive tu vida,
15 Dale alegría,
16 Escucha bien lo que te estoy diciendo,
17 No más barreras al sentimiento.
18 Chávez, corazón del pueblo.
19 Vive tu vida,
20 Dale alegría,
21 No pongas peros, sigue al mundo entero.
22 Sí viviremos y venceremos.
23 Chávez, corazón del pueblo.

Chorus 2:

24 ¡Actívate!
25 Tú sabes que nosotros somos lo que te
gustamos y te ponemos a bailar.
26 De corazón, de corazón, de corazón, de
corazón, con Chávez de corazón.

Verse 4:

27 Sí, yo quiero un mundo sin pobreza,
28 Que dé al amor como bandera,
29 Te juro que te hará crecer.

30 Tu corazón es bueno.

31 Tu corazón es bueno.

Verse 5:

32 Sí, yo quiero un mundo sin heridas,
33 Yo quiero aprovechar mi vida,

Verse 3:

11 I'm not God to tell you what to do,
12 What I know is that together we will be
victorious,
13 And we will save the world.

Chorus 1:

14 Live your life,
15 Give it happiness,
16 Listen well to what I'm telling you,
17 No more barriers to feeling.
18 Chávez, heart of the people.
19 Live your life,
20 Give it happiness,
21 Don't give excuses, continue on to the
whole world.
22 We will live and win.
23 Chávez, heart of the people.

Chorus 2:

24 Get going!
25 You know that we are what you like and
we will make you dance.
26 From the heart, from the heart, from the
heart, with Chávez in the heart.

Verse 4:

27 Yes, I want a world without poverty,
28 That presents love as its flag,
29 I swear that it will make you grow.

30 Your heart is good.

31 Your heart is good.

Verse 5:

32 Yes, I want a world without wounds,
33 I want to make the most of my life,

34 Haciendo siempre siempre el bien.	34 Always always doing good.
35 Tu corazón es bueno.	35 Your heart is good.
36 Tu corazón es bueno.	36 Your heart is good.
Verse 3	Verse 3
Chorus 1	Chorus 1
Chorus 2	Chorus 2
Verse 6:	Verse 6:
37 Un pueblo unido que da el ejemplo,	37 A unified people that provides the
38 Ya juntos somos más con Chávez de	example,
corazón.	38 Together, we are already more with
39 De corazón, de corazón, de corazón, de	Chávez in our hearts.
corazón, de corazón, con Chávez de corazón.	39 In our hearts, in our hearts, in our hearts,
	in our hearts, in our hearts, with Chávez in
	our hearts.
Chorus	Chorus
40 (Chávez:) ¡Los que quieren Patria vengan	40 (Chávez:) ¡Those that love the Homeland
conmigo!	come with me!

Analysis

The song “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo,” which translates as “Chávez, Heart of the People,” was written for Chávez’s 2012 election campaign. It became quite popular on Youtube, with two million views in under three years.¹⁰⁵ While this may seem fairly insignificant next to the number of views music about Putin received, such as “Takogo kak Putin” with over five times the views, the popularity of “Chávez, Corazón del Pueblo” on Youtube is actually very similar in

¹⁰⁵ Appendix 3.

proportion to population, as the population of Russia is approximately five times as large as that of Venezuela.¹⁰⁶

The composer of “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo” is Venezuelan pop sensation Hany Kauam, who often performed it in concert with fellow Venezuelans Omar Enrique and the group Los Cadillacs. In addition, Chávez “demonstrated his spontaneity singing and dancing alongside [the aforementioned performers]” multiple times during his 2012 campaign. These demonstrations of spontaneity seemed to be well received, and videos of the performances show large, enthusiastic crowds.¹⁰⁷

There are three main themes evident throughout the song. The first is a sense of empowerment, encouraging people to get involved. Another theme is that of emotional appeal. Finally, Chávez is subtly compared to Jesus Christ.

The listener is encouraged to get involved beginning in the the first verse with the lines “Yes, we can help the world / change history in a second.”¹⁰⁸ This verse gets the listeners’ attention and prepares them for the rest of the song by awakening their curiosity and empowering them. The two spoken-word lines immediately following this verse extend the theme. “Your heart is good,” the listener is told, at once flattered and encouraged to do good.¹⁰⁹ The second verse begins with the line “Yes, you are a leader of life,” encouraging listeners to take on a role of leadership. Then it continues on, proclaiming that “Changing the world is a joy, / It is in

¹⁰⁶ “Population of all Countries of the World,” *World Atlas*, Web, accessed February 27, 2015, URL: <http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/populations/ctypopls.htm>. February 27, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ “Descarga la letra y la canción ‘Chávez corazón del pueblo,’” *Ola Bolivariana*, August 6, 2012, Web, URL: <http://www.olabolivariana.org.ve/noticias/descarga-letra-cancion-chavez-corazon-pueblo/#.VOgPpvmG-mm>. February 20, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Lines 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Lines 4-5.

fashion to do good.”¹¹⁰ The message is that supporting Chávez is important, fun, and the right thing to do. In addition, the assertion that doing the right thing is fashionable gives an assurance of solidarity and even popularity. Solidarity, a sense of importance, and an assurance of victory come up in verse three and the first chorus as well: “Together, we will be victorious, / And we will save the world,” and “we will live and be victorious.” The second chorus distills this call to action into a single word, “actívate,” which can translate as “get going” or “get involved.”¹¹¹

The importance of emotions is underlined multiple times throughout the song. The first chorus explores this topic most directly. Its longest line, “listen well to what I am telling you,” has only the function of pointing to the next line, “no more barriers to feeling,” which is immediately followed by “Chávez, the heart of the people.”¹¹² In short, the first line demands attention or obedience, the second line asks the listener to suppress reason and open up entirely to emotions, and the third line reveals what is to drive these emotions. Furthermore, the spoken-word line that is repeated throughout the song, “your heart is good,” could be read as a reminder to listen to one’s emotions. On a more metatextual level, it could also be seen to imply that Chávez is good: accepting the assertion that Chávez is the heart of the people, and seeing as the song is directed at the people, one could equate the phrases “your heart is good” and “Chávez is good.” Finally, the second chorus features a repetition of the phrase “from the heart” and ends with the line “with Chávez in the heart.”¹¹³ The message is clear: feel instead of thinking, and accept Hugo Chávez into your heart.

¹¹⁰Lines 6-8.

¹¹¹ Lines 12-13, 22, 24.

¹¹² Lines 16-18.

¹¹³ Lines 4, 26.

The parallel between Chávez and Jesus Christ is quite subtly drawn throughout the song. The third verse begins with the humble-sounding disclaimer “I am not God to tell you what to do,” which underlines the fact that Chávez relies explicitly on secular authority in this song. In fact, Chávez, although officially Roman-Catholic, has a history of rejecting the teachings and the authority of the church: for example, he once stated that the afterlife as taught by Jesus Christ is a lie.¹¹⁴ Regardless of Chávez’s personal beliefs, it is hardly coincidental that the singer promises two lines later that “we,” that is Chávez and his supporters, will “save the world,” the precise mission statement of Jesus himself.¹¹⁵ In the fourth verse the singer says he wants a world “that presents love as its flag,” and in the fifth verse that he wants a “world without wounds.” In the same verse he also sings that he wants to live his life well, “always always doing good.”¹¹⁶ While the importance of love, the hope of a peaceful world and the definition of a well-lived life as one filled with good deeds are not unique to Christianity, the presence and close proximity of all these statements further supports the parallel drawn between Chávez and Christ. The sixth verse adds that “together, we are already more with Chávez in our hearts.”¹¹⁷ This is the most direct parallel of all: a Christian is to become “more” with Jesus in his heart.

Some of the Chávez’s political achievements, both domestic and abroad, are also featured, if less prominently. The fourth verse expresses the wish for “a world without poverty,” a reminder of Chávez’s greatest goal and accomplishment, namely the drastic reduction of poverty, and an encouragement to continue in his legacy.¹¹⁸ With the line “A united people that

¹¹⁴ “Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías Llama Mentiroso al Señor Jesucristo,” Video, 3:43, February 23, 2012, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn47PdYt_iw. 0:00 - 0:44.

¹¹⁵ Line 13.

¹¹⁶ Lines 28, 32-34.

¹¹⁷ Line 38.

¹¹⁸ Line 27.

sets the example,” verse six refers to Chávez’s efforts to institute or resurrect a sense of pan-Latin-American unity, and to the image he attempted to project as a leader surpassing national borders.¹¹⁹ While this vision of a united Latin America generally eclipsed Venezuelan nationalism in his rhetoric, Chávez himself appeals to the crowd to conclude the song: “Those that love the homeland, come with me!”¹²⁰

“Chávez Seguirá Contigo”

“Chávez Seguirá Contigo”	“Chávez Will Continue [to be] With You”
<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 Un sentimiento traspasó nuestras fronteras 2 Para demostrarle al mundo cuán grandiosa es Venezuela. 3 Ese sentimiento nunca muere, 4 Y se agiganta más y más, se llama Chávez, 5 Y en ti por siempre vivirá.</p> <p>Chorus: (2x)</p> <p>6 Nuestro Comandante nunca morirá, 7 Ese sentimiento siempre vivirá. 8 Nuestro eterno líder, nuestro eterno amigo, 9 Chávez no se ha ido, Chávez seguirá contigo.</p> <p>10 Decimos todos:</p> <p>Chorus 2: (2x)</p> <p>11 U A U A U A, no se va, 12 U A U A, Chávez vivirá en el pueblo.</p>	<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 A feeling crossed our borders 2 To demonstrate to the world how great Venezuela is. 3 This feeling never dies, 4 And it grows more and more, it’s called Chávez, 5 And in you it will live forever.</p> <p>Chorus: (2x)</p> <p>6 Our commander will never die, 7 That feeling will live forever. 8 Our eternal leader, our eternal friend, 9 Chávez has not left, Chávez will continue on with you.</p> <p>10 Let’s say all together:</p> <p>Chorus 2: (2x)</p> <p>11 U A U A U A, he won’t go, 12 U A U A, Chávez will live in the people.</p>

¹¹⁹ Line 37.

¹²⁰ Line 40.

<p>13 U A U A U A U A ¡muéstrale tus manos al cielo, Venezuela!</p> <p>Verse 2: 14 Está en el niño que despierta en la mañana, 15 Que camina hacia a la escuela que ahora no le falta nada, 16 En el viejito de la esquina, 17 En el obrero que trabaja, 18 En el campesino, allá en la montaña.</p> <p>Verse 3: 19 Él está en la ciudad y en la sabana, 20 Está en los lagos y en la cascada, 21 Está en su pueblo, el que más lo extraña, 22 Y también desde el cielo, él nos acompaña.</p> <p>Chorus 1 (2x)</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Verse 4: 23 No hay nada que nos detenga, 24 Esa es nuestra gran misión, 25 Aquí no hay tiempo para tristeza, 26 Ni para desilusión. 27 Y si algún día te sientes solo, llénate de emoción, 28 Porque no estás solo, Chávez siempre está en tu corazón.</p> <p>Chorus 1 (2x)</p> <p>29 Cuando el sentimiento es verdadero, la energía nunca muere.</p>	<p>13 U A U A U A U A, show your hands to the sky, Venezuela!</p> <p>Verse 2: 14 He is in the child that wakes up in the morning, 15 That walks towards the school that is now not lacking anything, 16 In the old man on the corner, 17 In the worker who works, 18 In the farmer, over there on the mountain.</p> <p>Verse 3: 19 He is in the city and in the savanna, 20 He is in the lakes and in the waterfall, 21 He is in his people, that miss him the most, 22 And even from heaven, he accompanies us.</p> <p>Chorus 1 (2x)</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Verse 4: 23 There is nothing to hold us back, 24 That is our great commission, 25 Here, there is no time for sadness, 26 Nor for disillusionment. 27 And if some day you feel lonely, fill yourself with emotion, 28 Because you are not alone, Chávez is always in your heart.</p> <p>Chorus 1 (2x)</p> <p>29 When the feeling is real, the energy never dies.</p>
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<p>Chorus 2</p> <p>30 ¡Chávez vivirá en el pueblo! 31 Hasta siempre Comandante.</p>	<p>Chorus 2</p> <p>30 Chávez will live in the people! 31 Our commander forever.</p>
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Analysis

The song “Chávez Seguirá Contigo,” which translates as “Chávez will continue [to be] with you,” was released on March 9, 2013, four days after Chávez’s death. It was written and recorded by Omar Acedo, a rising star in Venezuelan pop and salsa music. The top six videos have a fairly significant 606,000 views.¹²¹

The main goal of this song is to preserve and promote the personality cult of Chávez after his death by immortalizing him, not as a dead leader, but as a living spirit analogous to Jesus. To this end, “Chávez Seguirá Contigo” begins by representing Chávez as a “feeling,” bringing him into the realm of spirits through secular language. Next, various accomplishments of Chávez are listed to justify his deification, and finally, he is directly placed in the role of Jesus Christ as God and saviour.

The immortalization of Chávez, his metamorphosis from man to spirit, is begun in the first verse. “A feeling crossed our borders / [...] This feeling never dies / [...] it is called Chávez.”

¹²² The foundation for the immortality of Chávez laid, it is immediately made clear that this feeling is not just a static memory of a dead man, but rather a living organism that “will grow more and more [...] / And in you it will live forever.”¹²³ The key to the process is also revealed

¹²¹ Appendix 4.

¹²² Lines 1, 3, 4.

¹²³ Lines 4-5.

here in the mention of the audience: the continued success of Chávez's personality cult is reliant on the participation of the people.

The justification for the deification of Chávez begins in the first verse, touching on the issue of national pride with the statement that Chávez came "to demonstrate to the world how great Venezuela is."¹²⁴ The second verse lists the domestic achievements of Chávez. The drastic reduction of poverty and the increased investment in education under his leadership are mentioned first: "He is in the child that wakes up in the morning / That walks towards the school that is now not lacking anything."¹²⁵ Other social spending, such as better pensions and welfare programs, is alluded to next: Chávez is "in the old man on the corner / In the worker that works / In the farmer, over there on the mountain."¹²⁶ During his life, these demographics formed the base of Chávez's support; they are therefore most likely to continue supporting him after his death. The language of this verse could, however, also be seen as promoting both the first idea mentioned, namely Chávez's state as a spirit (in that he can be found in all of the people mentioned), and the third, namely his analogousness to Jesus.

The portrayal of Chávez in the role of Jesus is made more explicitly in the third and fourth verses. First, Chávez is represented as omnipresent on earth. His presence in his people, initially discussed in verse two, is mentioned again ("He is in his people which miss him the most") and then his presence is expanded to both artificial and natural environments: "He is in the city and in the savanna, / He is in the lakes and in the waterfall."¹²⁷ Next, Chávez is lifted further towards deific status through the fourth line, which establishes him as involved as well as

¹²⁴ Line 3.

¹²⁵ Lines 14-15.

¹²⁶ Lines 16-18.

¹²⁷ Lines 19-21.

omnipresent: “And even from heaven, he accompanies us.”¹²⁸ The third aspect of Christianity to be ascribed to Chávez is the great commission, in which Jesus told his disciples to go and spread his gospel.¹²⁹ The fourth verse begins “There is nothing that holds us back / That is our great commission, / Here there is no time for sadness / Nor for disillusionment.”¹³⁰ The last two lines of this excerpt stress the importance of complete, unquestioning dedication to and acceptance of the mission, both central to the teachings of Jesus. The last two lines of the verse subvert another aspect of Christianity, namely that of never being alone because Jesus is in your heart: “And if some day you feel lonely, fill yourself with emotion, / because you are not alone, Chávez is always in your heart.”¹³¹

The song’s two choruses serve to sum up and reinforce the song’s themes. The second chorus, “U A U A U A, he won’t go, / U A U A, Chávez will live in the people,” is based on the chant “U A Chávez no se va” (“U A Chávez won’t leave”) from pro-Chávez rallies in 2004 when he was facing a national recall vote.¹³² In the context of this song, however, these lines take on a new meaning, namely that Chávez will not leave the world. The previous song, “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo,” is invoked in the second chorus as well, by the melody of the line “Chávez corazón del pueblo” being played with no words. The first chorus underlines once more the image of an immortal, omnipresent Chávez who will never leave you nor forsake you: “Our Commander will never die / That feeling will live forever / Our eternal leader, our eternal friend / Chávez has not left, Chávez will continue on with you.”¹³³ The reference to Chávez as “eternal

¹²⁸ Line 22.

¹²⁹ Matthew 28, 16-20.

¹³⁰ Lines 23-26.

¹³¹ Lines 27-28.

¹³² Lines 11-13.

¹³³ Lines 6-9.

leader” is noteworthy, as it emphasizes the portrayal of Chávez as an active, growing force as opposed to a dead memory. The final words, spoken gravely, almost reverently, perfectly sum up the song’s central message: “[Our] commander forever.”¹³⁴

“El Regreso del Amigo”

“El Regreso del Amigo”	“The Return of the Friend”
<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 En la despedida del amigo queda un adiós detenido, 2 Palabras que se congelan, ganas de ya haberlas dicho, 3 Lágrimas que no se lloran pa’ no aceptar que se ha ido 4 Pena convertida en gloria, amanecer extendido.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>5 Para la partida de un amigo que nos devolvió la risa, 6 No hay adiós definitivo, ni finales de cenizas, 7 Tanto corazón dolido no se va creer la prisa 8 De la muerte que ha intentado manchar su roja camisa.</p> <p>Chorus 1:</p> <p>9 Toda la ternura de este amigo desparramada en la brisa 10 De un pueblo que habían dormido, de una América hecha trizas,</p>	<p>Verse 1:</p> <p>1 In the farewell of the friend remains a paused good-bye, 2 Words that freeze, wanting to already have said them, 3 Tears that don’t flow in order not to accept that he has left, 4 Sorrow converted to glory, sunrise extended.</p> <p>Verse 2:</p> <p>5 For the parting of a friend who returned us our smile, 6 There is no definitive farewell, nor an end in ashes, 7 Such a wounded heart will not believe the speed 8 Of the death that has tried to stain his red shirt.</p> <p>Chorus 1:</p> <p>9 All the tenderness of this friend scattered in the breeze 10 Of a people that had slept, of a fragmented America,</p>

¹³⁴ Line 31.

<p>11 Nadie piensa que se ha ido, fue un momentico a la misa, 12 Y va a volver con Sandino, con el Che, Martí y Bolívar.</p> <p>Verse 3: 13 Ese rastro que dejó el amigo, ese antídoto de vida, 14 Contra la sierpe que sueña con América dividida, 15 El que levantó al mendigo y compartió su comida, 16 Su manera de estar vivo nunca va a tener medida.</p> <p>Chorus 2: 17 Todos los amigos del amigo tienen el alma bordada 18 Con las frases que nos dijo con campechana sonrisa, 19 Nadie piensa que se ha ido, fue un momentico a la misa, 20 Y va a volver con Sandino, con el Che, Martí y Bolívar.</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Improvisaciones</p> <p>Chorus 1</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Verse 4: 21 De un pueblo que se despierta de una América arrasada 22 La ternura de este amigo es la luz desparramada,</p>	<p>11 No-one thinks that he has left, it was a moment to the mass, 12 And he will return with Sandino, Che, Martí and Bolívar.</p> <p>Verse 3: 13 That trail that the friend left, that antidote of life, 14 Against the serpent that dreams of a divided America, 15 He who raised up the beggar and shared his food, 16 His way of being alive will never be measured.</p> <p>Chorus 2: 17 All of the friends of the friend have a soul bordered 18 With the phrases he told us with a cheerful smile, 19 No-one thinks that he has gone, it was a moment to the mass, 20 And he will return with Sandino, with Che, Martí and Bolívar.</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Improvisations</p> <p>Chorus 1</p> <p>Chorus 2</p> <p>Verse 4: 21 Of a people that awakes from a devastated America, 22 The tenderness of this friend is the shining light,</p>
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23 Con las frases que nos dijo con su risa campechana	23 With the phrases he told us with his sincere laugh
24 Seguiremos el camino del amigo junto al alba	24 We will continue the way of the friend near daybreak
25 No hay adiós definitivo, ni finales de cenizas.	25 There is no definitive farewell, nor an end in ashes.
Chorus 2	Chorus 2
Chorus 1	Chorus 1
Chorus 2	Chorus 2

Analysis

“El Regreso del Amigo,” which translates as “The Return of the Friend,” was written by Raúl Torres for Fidel Castro in memory of Chávez, and performed by Torres alongside a number of well-known Cuban musicians. The song is notable in first line not for its popularity, although it gathered a respectable 340,000 views on Youtube; rather, it is important due to its status as a farewell from one world leader to another, and due to the controversial role the close relationship between Chávez and Fidel played in the public perception of Chávez.¹³⁵

This song, although also written in response to Chávez’s death, follows markedly different goals from “Chávez Seguirá Contigo.” Chávez’s legacy is discussed at length, and Chávez is deified as a great revolutionary pan-American leader and as an opponent of U.S.-led imperialism, as would befit the interests of Castro. The song also underlines the sincerity of Chávez, his impact, and his image as a man of the people.

¹³⁵ Appendix 5.

Chávez's legacy as anti-U.S. leader is mentioned repeatedly. In verse three, he is referred to as the man who left an "antidote [...] / Against the serpent that dreams of a divided America."

¹³⁶ The serpent is the U.S. with its (at the time of the song's publication) long-standing trade embargo against Cuba and a long history of interfering in the affairs of Latin American countries. Verse four makes reference to "a people that is waking up from a devastated America,"¹³⁷ pointing to the historical large-scale exploitation of Latin America through foreign-owned, largely U.S., companies. This sentiment is echoed in the first chorus, which refers to Latin Americans as "a people that had been sleeping," and to "a fragmented America."

¹³⁸ The image of Chávez as a pan-American leader, an anti-imperialist revolutionary in the tradition of Bolívar and others like him, is an aspect central to his cult of personality. After all, Chávez named his movement the Bolivarian revolution, or the *Ola Bolivariana*, the Bolivarian Wave. It plays a central role in this song, with both choruses concluding with the line that Chávez "will return with Sandino, the Che, Martí and Bolívar," referring to anti-imperialist leaders from all over Latin America: Sandino in Nicaragua, Che in Cuba, Martí in Argentina and Bolívar in northwestern South America.¹³⁹ Firstly, Chávez is placed through these statements on equal footing with these heroes of revolution and independence; secondly, he is again represented as a god who will return (as a saviour). The induction of Chávez into the pantheon of Latin American revolutionary heroes is also depicted in a popular video on Youtube, which shows him entering paradise, walking over a lush green field to be met by the heroes of Latin

¹³⁶ Lines 13-14.

¹³⁷ Line 21.

¹³⁸ Line 10.

¹³⁹ Lines 12, 20..

America, including the above-mentioned four.¹⁴⁰ This approach to the immortalization of Chávez relies far less on Christian language than did “Chávez Seguirá Contigo,” focusing more on anti-imperialist revolution.

The sincerity of Chávez and his personal impact also play prominent roles. Verse four invokes his sincerity in discussion of the “tenderness of this friend” as “a shining light,” and his “sincere laugh.”¹⁴¹ The second chorus also mentions his “cheerful smile,” and the third verse refers to his *joie de vivre*.¹⁴² His impact domestically, the reduction of poverty, is given mention as well, Chávez being referred to as “He who raised up the beggar and shared his food.”¹⁴³

One final note regarding the deification of Chávez is the repeated reference to Chávez as simply “the friend.” In Christian terms, Jesus is often referred to as “the Friend;” although there is relatively little religious imagery in this song, the fact that it is entitled “The Return of the Friend” and that its most thematic line is the return of the Friend with the other gods of the Latin American anti-imperialist pantheon supports the presentation of Chávez in the role of a messianic saviour.

Songs against Chávez

The most noteworthy of the songs against Chávez is “Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo.” Although other anti-Chávez songs exist, they have achieved far less popularity.

¹⁴⁰ “Llegada de Hugo Chávez al cielo en HD,” Video, 0:59, March 27, 2013, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiM27ItOe34>. February 21, 2015.

¹⁴¹ Lines 22, 23.

¹⁴² Line 18.

¹⁴³ Line 15.

“Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo”

“Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo”	“Chávez, the Thief of the People”
<p>Verse 1: 1 Si, podemos destrozarnos el mundo, 2 Robarnos todo en un segundo, 3 Y luego desaparecer.</p> <p>4 Porque robar es bueno. 5 Porque robar es bueno.</p> <p>Verse 2: 6 Sí, has mentido toda tu vida, 7 Te hiciste rico enseguida, 8 Expropiando sin mirar a quien.</p> <p>9 Porque expropiar es bueno. 10 Porque expropiar es bueno.</p> <p>Verse 3: 11 Sé que tu dios aquí se llama “Fidel,” 12 Y si pudieras tú serías su mujer, 13 "Hoy vamos a expropiar a to' el mundo."</p>	<p>Verse 1: 1 Yes, we can destroy the world, 2 Steal everything for ourselves in a second, 3 And afterwards disappear.</p> <p>4 Because stealing is good. 5 Because stealing is good.</p> <p>Verse 2: 6 Yes, you have lied all your life, 7 You got rich instantly, 8 Expropriating without looking at whom.</p> <p>9 Because expropriating is good. 10 Because expropriating is good.</p>
<p>Chorus 1: 14 Destroza vidas, 15 No te cohibas, 16 Saquemos, si quieres, el mundo entero. 17 Lo robaremos, lo expropiaremos, 18 Chávez el ladrón del pueblo.</p>	<p>Verse 3: 11 I know that your god here is called “Fidel,” 12 And if you could, you would be his wife, 13 "Today we'll expropriate everyone."</p>
<p>Verse 4: 19 Yo amo a Fidel, de corazón, 20 De corazón, de corazón, 21 Chávez es un ladrón.</p>	<p>Chorus 1: 14 Destroy lives, 15 Don't hold back, 16 If you want, we'll take the whole world. 17 We will rob and expropriate it, 18 Chávez, the thief of the people.</p> <p>Verse 4: 19 I love Fidel from the heart,</p>

<p>Verse 5: 22 Sí, cambié de bando enseguida, 23 Sin importar lo que me digan, 24 Y ya olvidé RCTV.</p> <p>25 Porque olvidar es bueno. 26 Porque olvidar es bueno.</p> <p>Verse 6: 27 Yo quiero ser famoso, 28 Y no me importa con quién.</p> <p>29 No me importa. 30 No me importa.</p> <p>31 Jalando bola sé que lo puedo ser, 32 "Hoy vamos a expropiar to' el mundo."</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>33 "Los que quieren plata roben conmigo!"</p>	<p>20 From the heart, from the heart, 21 Chávez is a thief.</p> <p>Verse 5: 22 Yes, I changed sides instantly, 23 Without caring what I was told, 24 And I've already forgotten RCTV.</p> <p>25 Because forgetting is good. 26 Because forgetting is good.</p> <p>Verse 6: 27 I want to be famous, 28 And I don't care with whom.</p> <p>29 I don't care. 30 I don't care.</p> <p>31 Kissing ass I know what I can be, 32 "Today we will expropriate everybody."</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>33 "Those that want/love money, steal with me!"</p>
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Analysis

“Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo” (“Chávez, the Robber of the People”) is a parody of the most popular pro-Chávez song, “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo.” The only difference in the title is that the word for heart, “corazón,” is replaced by the word for thief, namely “ladrón.” This works

particularly well in Spanish, since the two words rhyme. This song became, by Venezuelan standards, very popular on Youtube, with the top 6 videos garnering over 1.2 million views.¹⁴⁴

It is a smoothly-executed parody. The structure, phrasing and rhyme scheme of the original are largely maintained, and the video is cut together from the original video of “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo.” The singers are shown singing when the words or rhyme scheme of the parody equal the original; otherwise, shots of Chávez and his supporters are shown, similarly to the original.¹⁴⁵

“Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo” presents several complaints regarding Chávez. As suggested by the title, corruption is a central theme to the song. It is also critical of Chávez’s domestic policy, in particular of his liberal use of expropriation; in addition, Chávez’s history of crushing dissent is criticized, as is his relationship with Fidel Castro.

The issue of corruption is brought up immediately in the first verse: “Yes, we can destroy the world / steal everything for ourselves in just a second / and then disappear.”¹⁴⁶ This is followed by the spoken word line, repeated, “because stealing is good,” in contrast to the corresponding line of the original, which is “your heart is good.”¹⁴⁷ The fourth verse says “Chávez is a robber,” and the chorus further underlines the issue: “Destroy lives / don’t hold back / if you want, we’ll take the entire world / we will rob it, expropriate it / Chávez, the robber of the people.”¹⁴⁸ According to *Transparency International’s* Corruption Index, Venezuela was ranked 165th out of 176 countries in the world in 2012, tied with Burundi, Chad and Haiti. This

¹⁴⁴ Appendix 6.

¹⁴⁵ “Canción Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo,” Video, 2:03, August 29, 2012, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGBs4TQoMhA>.

¹⁴⁶ Lines 1-3.

¹⁴⁷ Lines 4-5.

¹⁴⁸ Lines 14-18, 21..

number represents a significant drop from 69th place (out of 91) in 2001, near the beginning of Chávez's time in power (a move from the 24th to the 8th percentile).¹⁴⁹ Wide-spread corruption and embezzlement of government funds are well-documented in Chávez's inner circle as well, and it is said that a lot of money has been funnelled out of the country both for personal and political use.¹⁵⁰

Expropriation, the forcible takeover of private companies by the government, is one of the things Chávez was most known for. *Conindustria*, the Venezuelan Confederation of Industries, reports that the Chávez government expropriated 1,284 businesses between 2002 and 2013.¹⁵¹ Many of these expropriations did not follow the government's own laws, and were widely viewed as money- and power grabs by Chávez and his close associates.¹⁵² Verse two accuses Chávez: "You got rich instantly / by expropriating without looking at whom," followed by a spoken line repeated twice, "because expropriating is good."¹⁵³ While the expropriations were presented and initially seen as a way to counter capitalist imperialism, Chávez quickly turned against seemingly innocent domestic businesses as well, leading to the charge that his only goal was to get rich. The third verse, in discussing the relationship between Fidel and Castro, comes back to this subject again, quoting Chávez (or Fidel) as saying "Today we will expropriate everyone." This line is repeated in the sixth verse, and the chorus expands on the issue with the lines: "Destroy lives / don't hold back / if you want, we'll take the entire world /

¹⁴⁹ "Corruption Perceptions Index," *Transparency International*, Web, accessed March 4, 2015, URL: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2012/results>.

¹⁵⁰ Gustavo Coronel, "Corruption, Mismanagement and Abuse of Power in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela," *Cato Institute*, November 27, 2006, Web, URL: <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/dpa2.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ "Gobierno intervino 1.284 empresas entre 2002 y 2013," *Conindustria*, January 21, 2014, Web, URL: <http://www.conindustria.org/inicio/noticias/detalle-de-noticias/gobierno-intervino-1284-empresas-entre-2002-y-2013/h153c3c5353ba387f5c7c787361a31c77/>.

¹⁵² "Expropriations in Venezuela: Full Speed Ahead," *The Economist*, October 29, 2010, Web, URL: http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2010/10/expropriations_venezuela.

¹⁵³ Lines 7-10.

we will rob it, expropriate it / Chávez, the robber of the people.”¹⁵⁴ The particularly interesting thing about these lines is the attempt to equate robbery and expropriation. On one hand, this can be read as a response to the use of expropriations by the Chávez government; on the other, equating the concept of expropriation with robbery could suggest a capitalist bias by the writer. Expropriations initially supported Chávez’s personality cult, since they were seen as action against foreign imperialist actors; however, with indiscriminate use, they became a detractor.

Chávez developed a reputation for crushing dissent, especially towards the later part of his presidency. This is discussed in the fifth verse: “Yes, I changed sides instantly / without caring what I was told / And I’ve already forgotten RCTV,” followed by the chant “because forgetting is good / because forgetting is good.”¹⁵⁵ Changing sides here could be referring to the mutability of “Chavismo,” as Chávez’s ideology came to be called, which always seemed to mold to fit his current needs. As a side note, this presented a challenge after Chávez’s death, as the direction Chavismo would take depended largely on which successor was chosen.

Eventually, the choice fell on former Nicolás Maduro, a communist.¹⁵⁶ Regarding dissent, *RCTV* was a TV station whose broadcasts supported Chávez’s opponents in the 2002 *coup d’état* that temporarily removed Chávez from power. In 2007, when its license was up for renewal, the government refused to renew it, citing the reason that *RCTV* incited the 2002 coup attempt, although no trial or hearing was ever held. Chávez continued on to close *Globovisión*, the last remaining TV station critical of the government, in 2009. These moves received little mention in the media, hence the last two lines, “forgetting is good.” Also officially forgotten were Chávez’s

¹⁵⁴ Lines 14-18.

¹⁵⁵ Lines 22-26.

¹⁵⁶ Javier Corrales, “Chavismo after Chávez,” *Foreign Affairs*, Web, January 4, 2013, URL: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138745/javier-corrales/chavismo-after-chavez>.

policies that led to his ouster in 2002: between being restored to power in 2002 and the recall vote in 2004, Chávez spent a lot of government funds on social programs to win back the support of the general populace.¹⁵⁷

Chávez's relationship with Fidel Castro, leader of Cuba, had a negative impact on his macho image. It is the main topic of Verse Three: "I know that your god here is called 'Fidel' / And that, if you could, you would be his wife / 'Today we will expropriate everyone.'"¹⁵⁸ In a somewhat juvenile way, it points out not only the close relationship of Chávez and Fidel, but also that Fidel, not Chávez, played the leading role in the partnership. It suggests that, for all his bravado in opposing the US, Chávez was not really an independent leader, but rather subjective to Fidel. The progression of Venezuelan politics towards Cuban-style government was deeply unpopular in Venezuela and further detracted from Chávez's popularity.^{159,160}

The last line, in the original song Chávez's spoken line "Those that love the homeland come with me," is changed to "Those that love/want money steal with me."¹⁶¹ This sums up the primary charge levelled at Chávez through this song: he and his ruling circle enriched themselves by stealing from and exploiting the very people they pretended to serve and protect.

¹⁵⁷ "Venezuela: Concentration and Abuse of Power Under Chávez," *Human Rights Watch*, Web, July 17, 2012, URL: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/17/venezuela-concentration-and-abuse-power-under-ch-vez>.

¹⁵⁸ Lines 11-13.

¹⁵⁹ Brian A. Nelson, "Hugo Chávez," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Last updated March 4, 2013. URL: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/108140/Hugo-Chavez/285482/The-Chavez-presidency>.

¹⁶⁰ "Modelo Cubano en Venezuela," *Datanalisis*, March 2012, Web, URL: <https://app.box.com/s/bd5438143f9d4d19089a>, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶¹ Appendix 9. The Spanish verb used here, "querer," is ambiguous, as it can be translated both as "to love" and "to want."

II.vi. Conclusions regarding Chávez

Themes common to the pieces of pro-Chávez music analysed above are the portrayal of Chávez as a god, his opposition to the U.S., and direct appeals to emotion.

One of the central themes found in the pro-Chávez music is the representation of Chávez in the role of a god, in particular Jesus Christ. It is most apparent in “Chávez Seguirá Contigo,” but also makes appearances in “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo” and “El Regreso del Amigo.” The first two songs differ from the third in terms of how Chávez is portrayed as God. In “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo” and “Chávez Seguirá Contigo,” both written by Venezuelans and intended primarily for a Venezuelan audience, Christian language and imagery take precedence. However, in “El Regreso del Amigo,” written by a Cuban for Cuban Communist leader Fidel Castro, Chávez is represented as simply another god in the pantheon of Latin American revolutionary heroes, and there is no explicitly Christian language. This is most likely due to cultural differences between Venezuela and Cuba: Venezuela is virtually exclusively Roman-Catholic, whereas Cuba, although no longer an officially atheist state, has a somewhat weaker connection to Roman Catholicism.

Another common theme is the emphasis on Chávez’s opposition to the USA. Not surprisingly, the Cuban-written and produced “El Regreso del Amigo” focuses the most on this point, but both the other two songs make mention of it as well. Anti-americanism served three important roles in Chávez’s personality cult. Firstly, it provided a convenient scapegoat for all sorts of domestic and foreign problems; for example, Chávez often accused his opponents of being puppets of the USA, and implied that the USA was infecting South- and Latin-American

leftist leaders with cancer.¹⁶² Secondly, it served to give Chávez a lot of leeway amongst people suspicious of the US government both in Venezuela and abroad: they may not have approved of everything he did, but if they were presented with the choice of either Chávez or the USA, they would choose Chávez. Thirdly, it broadened his appeal abroad. In Latin America, which suffered under foreign influences from the arrival of the conquistadors to that of the American companies in the twentieth century, Chávez was seen as the foremost champion of “anti-imperialism.” Further abroad, other countries feeling threatened by U.S. influence, such as Russia, also gravitated towards Chávez.¹⁶³

The heavy emphasis on emotion and on heeding one’s emotions above all else is hardly surprising in the promotion of a personality cult. The elevation of feelings above reason is, after all, crucial to the success of all cults and much of politics in general. Nonetheless, the direct, overt nature of these appeals, in particular in “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo” and “Chávez Seguirá Contigo” is worth noting.

There are few commonalities between the pro- and anti-Chávez songs analysed above. The pro-Chávez music tends to focus on Chávez’s domestic successes, particularly on the reduction of poverty, the portrayal of Chávez as a god, and appeal to emotion, whereas the anti-Chávez music focused on domestic failures, namely the policy of expropriation, and corruption. The one obvious similarity is the theme of anti-imperialism, discussed to varying degrees in all pro-Chávez songs, and again in the anti-Chávez one, which opposes expropriation, one of Chávez’s strongest anti-imperialist weapons.

¹⁶² “Hugo Chávez cree que EEUU está detrás del cáncer de presidentes latinos,” Video, 1:13, February 10, 2012, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYUFWLtxv0M>.

¹⁶³ Виктор Васильев, “Путин: Чавес был близким другом России,” *Голос Америки*, March 6, 2013. URL: <http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/chavez-death-russia-reaction/1616111.html>.

III.i. Comparison of Music Analysed for Putin and Chávez

There are a number of similarities to be found in the music of Putin and Chávez. For one, both focus on emotion to the exclusion of reason. For another, both Putin and Chávez are equated with a culturally significant higher power: Putin with the tsar, and Chávez with Jesus/a god. The role of nationalism and anti-Americanism in the personality cults of both leaders is also reflected in the music. A major difference is that Chávez embraces the music in his favour, whereas Putin rejects or ignores it.

The role of emotion in the pro-Chávez music is very overt, with lines such as “no more barriers to feeling,” and “if some day you feel lonely, fill yourself with emotion, / because [...] Chávez is always in your heart.”¹⁶⁴ In the pro-Putin music, the message is more subtle. The judges’ reactions in the video of Putin on *Golos* bring the point across most clearly, but it is present in the other songs as well. For example, the theme of “Takogo kak Putin” is that of a girl singing that she wants a man like Putin; whatever she experiences, from a breakup with her immature boyfriend to watching the news, her immediate emotional reaction is to turn towards Putin. In “Pesnia rossiiskogo chinovnika,” the primary emotion is an irrational fear of a Putin that terrorizes you in your dreams if you do something wrong. This type of emotional representation brings up a fundamental distinction in the themes of songs regarding Chávez and Putin. The songs about Chávez focus on inspiring loyalty through love, whereas the pro-Putin music seeks to produce loyalty through fear and respect. Even “Takogo kak Putin,” which could be seen as a love song, focuses on Putin’s strength, power, and stability.

¹⁶⁴ “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo;” “Chávez Seguirá Contigo.”

Both Putin and Chávez seek legitimacy from culturally significant figures. Putin is cast in the role of the tsar, who was revered by the Russian people for centuries, and Chávez is cast in the role of Jesus Christ in the Venezuelan-written songs, and that of a more generic god in the Cuban-written one. In both cases, these representations imply power, divine right, moral authority, and unimpeachability. This is reflected to a certain extent in the anti-music, in that both leaders are accused of imagining themselves to be above the law.

The role of nationalism in the music reveals a difference in the foci of Putin and Chávez. Chávez was very focused on South- and Latin-American unity, although he did work to raise Venezuela's image on an international stage as well. This is reflected in the music, which mentions his pan-American anti-imperialism far more often than Venezuelan nationalism. In contrast, the pro-Putin songs focus primarily on Russia itself, mentioning other countries only implicitly (for example, in "Takogo kak Putin" it is mentioned that Putin talks on TV about the world being at a crossroads, a variation of his call to choose sides between himself and the West). The political aspects of this mutual dislike of the USA are discussed in Section I.iv..

One of the key distinctions between the respective approaches of Putin and Chávez towards the music written about them is that Chávez embraced it, even singing "Chávez Corazón del Pueblo" on stage several times, whereas Putin never acknowledged it. Considering Russia's strictly-controlled media field, it is highly unlikely that a video such as that of Putin on *Golos* would have been allowed to air on (Kremlin-controlled) Channel 1. That a video such as "Takogo kak Putin" would go viral without governmental promotion is questionable, and that a pop star of Natali's calibre would be allowed to perform it on national television is virtually impossible; even if Putin is not directly involved in the production of the pro-Putin songs, he is

involved in their promotion. The case of Stalin presents an interesting parallel here. He was, both in public and in private life, openly against his personality cult, but at the same time exercised complete control over the media outlets that tirelessly promoted it.¹⁶⁵

III.ii. Conclusion

All in all, the themes traced in the analyses of the songs both for and against Putin and Chávez coincide with the aspects of their personality cults and politics as analysed in Section 1. The influence of mass politics can be seen in the populist appeal and imagery in the texts and presentations; this music is distributed through mass media, primarily TV and the internet; the presentation and promotion of the music can be controlled so closely because of the closed societies both leaders have constructed; the power of popular legitimacy is proven by the creation and promotion of this music, in that government-aligned forces are putting so much effort into influencing the people (and although a lot of religious imagery is used, the cult object's goal is to take the place of Jesus or the tsar, rather than be legitimized through the approval of a deity); the music for both personality cults presents patricentric and macho images of the leaders, and in particular of Putin.

The contrasts noted in the previous section could be the result of cultural differences. On one side, the strongly Roman-Catholic Venezuelan population would react well to the focus on love and Jesus in the pro-Chávez music. On the other, Russian society, partially atheist and partially Orthodox, would find such overtly religious imagery quite divisive. A tsar-like figure is much less so; for Orthodox believers, it is a return to a more religious society, and for more

¹⁶⁵ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 29.

secular-minded Russians, it is a reminder of imperial glory. The focus on endowing Putin with the tsar's attributes, rather than directly mentioning the tsar, further avoids divisiveness or criticism by opponents of the tsardom. Another way that the Kremlin has attempted to neutralize this potentially divisive history is through the revitalization and aggressive promotion of an alternative view of Russian history, which sees Muscovy, the forerunner of the Russian Empire, as a direct social and political descendant of the Kievan Rus', Stalin as a great, progressive and modernizing leader, and the fall of the Soviet Union as artificial and a betrayal of Russia.¹⁶⁶ As many controversial topics are whitewashed and forcibly removed from general discourse, chances of widespread dissent are minimized more and more.

The contrast between Putin's nationalism and Chávez's focus on Latin- and South-American unity is also significant. Throughout his career, Chávez openly promoted a pan-American sense of unity (excluding Canada and the USA), which is reflected in the music. In the songs about Putin, however, who has been variously accused of attempting to resurrect the USSR and restore the empire, there is no mention of pan-Slavism of any kind. This stark lack of mention of Putin's supposed imperial ambitions, which currently play such a large role in international politics, could have the goal of maintaining the flexibility of Putin's ideology. Rather than be tied to any particular principle or ideology, Putin has in the past always been able to adjust his public value system as deemed necessary. In fact, his whole cult of personality is constructed to focus on him, to the exclusion of any clear ideology, tradition, or predecessors.

In contrast to Chávez, whose songs portray him as the ideological successor of Christ, Bolívar, Martí, and others, Putin stands entirely alone; there are no references to specific

¹⁶⁶ Walter Laquere, "After The Fall: Russia in Search of a New Ideology," *World Affairs* (Online Edition, March/April 2014), URL: <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/after-fall-russia-search-new-ideology>.

historical figures in the songs, although some of his historical predecessors, such as Stalin and Lenin, are actively promoted by the Kremlin on political and educational fronts.¹⁶⁷ That is to say, Putin has no ideological predecessors and is therefore not tied to any particular ideological tradition, even one seemingly central to his government's politics. On the other hand, the line of predecessors built up for Chávez imbues his personality cult with an integral set of values, such as anti-imperialism from Sandino, pan-Latin American unity from Bolívar and Martí, and love and compassion (or even socialism) from Jesus.

A final difference brought up in the comparison above is the differing approach of each leader to his own personality cult. Chávez's enthusiastic embracing of his cult of personality could be seen as analogous to Latin American culture, which expresses affection far more openly and effusively than Russian culture, which tends far more towards restraint and coolness, at least in public. The fact that Chávez sang a song in praise of himself serves to portray him as approachable, warm, and accessible within the context of Venezuelan culture; were Putin to do the same in Russia, it would likely not be very well received.

The question that remains, of course, is whether these differences are indeed effects of cultural factors, or whether they have more to do with varying political situations and the personal idiosyncrasies of the cult objects themselves. Most likely, the truth is to be found somewhere in the middle.

One way to answer this question would be through an analysis of a broader spectrum of personality cults. The patterns that emerge, especially regarding emotional basis as discussed above, would allow for generalizations along regional, political, religious, or social lines.

¹⁶⁷ Vladimir Ryzhkov, "Putin's Distorted History," *Moscow Times*, Web, November 18, 2013, URL: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/putins-distorted-history/489799.html>.

A second possibility for further study would be a more thorough examination of each personality cult, examining other media, from paintings to fiction to news reports, analysing specifically for the media's emotional content as discussed above.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Popularity of “Takogo kak Putin”

Popularity on youtube.com as of February 14, 2015: 10,208,060

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kfImlm4S9g> - 5,268,745
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFOPd6pgjI - 1,318,506
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tng8g95snLw> - 1,142,185
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUh9pThGdm4> (Натали) - 762,186
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zk_VszbZa_s (English subtitles) - 689,701
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gncW1zqMFgs> (English version) - 639,847
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWasqyZmQrM> - 386,890

Appendix 2 - Popularity of Putin on *Golos*

Popularity on youtube.com as of February 16, 2015: 10.947.394

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTqvcS4pLjk> - 3.264.879
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYMM3ZE_CZg - 2.433.437
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEri_JPFgzU - 1.911.309
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AphcpvfgZZo> - 1.287.315
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukOVLSdr_vI - 1.229.313
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxV_JkFq7_Y - 821.131

Appendix 3 - Popularity of “Chávez Corazón del Pueblo”

Popularity on youtube.com as of 01/05/2015: 1,999,189

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pbIkeZR24s - 1,042,354
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOxj9MLP_u8 - (with Los Cadillacs and Omar Enrique) 219,144
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsejbsZ_ZdM - 145,352
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuKFQdYQxF4> - 144,037
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dSxNlidMmM> - 121,849
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-EWfIqwBBg> - 118,350
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRyoPvIW13Y> - 109,332
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMrs8AT5ueo> - 98,501

Appendix 4 - Popularity of “Chávez Seguirá Contigo”

Popularity on youtube.com as of February 27, 2015: 606.338

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yokHgFi_BU - 279.718
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQSmYBwSjL8> - 87.268
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LL0tDpJEqIM> - 82.027
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iwi0RU5Yfxo> - 80.091
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fC9cX1ma16g> - 44.964
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0tyOhAyEmw> - 32.270

Appendix 5 - Popularity of “El Regreso del Amigo”

Popularity on youtube.com as of February 27, 2015: 343.949

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGZxtFh_vLE - 89.722
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNY7koe5NOQ> - 70.645
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LONSc9xNB7M> - 67.846
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcJwDQDEb8Q> - 39.877
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWyIY4KWX7k> - 39.364
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6At5RIcnXuQ> - 36.485

Appendix 6 - Popularity of “Chávez el Ladrón del Pueblo”

Popularity on youtube.com as of March 4, 2015: 1.248.853

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGBs4TQoMhA> - 897.450
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuKFQdYQxF4> - 144.096
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffBGH6T-Qys> - 96.963
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lJodxqwRa8> - 56.348
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0G0gH3CzH0> - 39.934
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6BfJxNJ0tM> - 14.062

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