

Kaip mes žaidėme revoliuciją / 'How We Played the Revolution' (2012)

Documentary/Historical film, 69 min.

Directed and written by GIEDRE ZICKYTE.

France and Lithuania: Just A Moment.

Language: Lithuanian.

Do not expect this film to be a serious, politically engaged documentary on tense multilateral negotiations by high-level political actors, because as the title suggests this revolution was *played*. *How We Played the Revolution* (2012) by Giedre Zickyte introduces the viewer to the grassroots of the Singing Revolution in Lithuania through the story of an unprecedented phenomenon in the music history of this small socialist republic—the satirical rock band Antis. The band’s incredibly theatrical and grotesque looks, combined with puzzling lyrics subtly mocking various aspects of the Soviet system, was the perfect mixture for the bored Lithuanian public of the time that had been lulled by the stagnation of the Brezhnev years

On New Year’s Eve 1984, a group of architects from Vilnius decided to set up a band bearing the name Antis. *How We Played the Revolution* starts with the band’s rise to immense popularity and leads up to Lithuania’s withdrawal from the USSR. It combines carefully selected archive material and present-day testimonials from the people who were closely involved in this extraordinary theatrical and musical project. The film portrays the events of the late 1980s as a game, in which rock music played its own role alongside political leaders of the liberation movement. The film outlines very accurately how thin the limit between innocent artistic performances and fundamental political change was. Nothing illustrates this better than the name of the band itself: Antis can be literally translated as ‘duck’. The fact that these events were taking place in a time when nothing was without deeper political meaning, however, has to be kept in mind. Even the most absurd words can appear to be well-considered political statements. It is then for the audience to decide whether they would prefer a literal translation of the name, or would rather view the project as an Anti-S (anti-Soviet) phenomenon; the astute musicians made sure that the ambiguity of the band’s name would be understandable to non-Lithuanian speakers as well. Nevertheless, Antis toured around Lithuania, claiming to be genuine communists, as that was the only way to make sure they could perform on a large stage in front of an ecstatic crowd. They represented the other face of the revolution: the one wearing jeans and whipping its hair to the wild rock tunes.

We often take the dissolution of the USSR for granted, considering it an inevitable phenomenon; it is difficult for us to understand why even inhabitants of a remote rural Lithuanian village were unable to hold back their tears on 11 March 1990, while holding Lithuanian flags in their hands and singing the national anthem that had been forbidden for almost half a century. This film, made in the era of freedom of expression, encourages the viewer to appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of this historical period. This was a time when any kind of art could transmit a hidden message to a public able to read it; a time when the peaceful but determined fight for freedom united an entire nation as it had never been before. The selection of the soundtrack and the particular historical events portrayed in the

film aim to reproduce the unique atmosphere of euphoria and joyousness that reigned in Lithuania and other Baltic states before the dissolution of the USSR.

How We Played the Revolution is for those who are curious to see what kind of artistic expressions were provoked by the absurdity of the late Soviet regime. It is for those who want to know how far the liberating measures of *perestroika* let its citizens go and, ultimately, it is for those who wonder why, after witnessing Antis, Lithuanian people understood that fundamental change was ultimately inevitable.

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