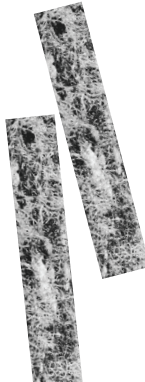


# AGIT-PUNK



**In August 1980, one of the leading British post-punk bands The Pop Group played in Helsinki at a festival organised by Spartakiadit, an association linked to the Communist Party of Finland. Spartakiadit was a cultural association promoting international activities solidarising with peace movements.**

**If post-punk was “popular modernism” (as Mark Fisher called it) then The Pop Group—who modernised punk with free jazz, dub and experimental forms—deserves this definition. By 1980, when The Pop Group performed in Helsinki, their songs had evolved from the primitive-funk-force of visceral punk to Rock Against Racism influenced by the “philosophy of anti-Nazi funk.” With the album *For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder?*, released in Spring 1980, the sound of the band became more analytical and propagandistic, without losing its edge. The result was a new agitational form, boldly claiming that capitalism is the most barbaric of all religions. The slogans of The Pop Group were not only abstract statements against war and capitalism, they were also about state violence towards immigrants, striking expenses of military industry, and orchestrated activities of neo-nazi mobs.**



**Whilst in correspondence with The Pop Group’s singer Mark Stewart, before his sudden passing, he suggested us focusing on the lyrics, which he called the key to “the praxis” of The Pop Group. This is what we are doing in this exhibition: showing that the agitational content of the band’s music is as complex and poetic as their modernist sound.**

**An important segment of Agit-Punk is to rework the slogans of The Pop Group, and to suggest that the anti-war and anti-capitalist messages of the band are as relevant today as in 1980 during Nato’s militarisation of Europe. Apart from slogans, the exhibition also presents the selection of *Plutonium Blondes*, columns mostly written by music journalist Cynthia Rose. Published between 1981 and 1982 in *New Musical Express*, a leading British music journal, these columns give detailed information on the extent of anti-war activism of the underground alternative music scene in the beginning of the eighties.**

**Similarly as punk being open to leftist and anti-capitalist ideas, also the left was ready to engage with the immediacy of punk. The Pop Group concert in Helsinki organised by Spartakiadit in 1980 is a testimony of this openness. It illustrates on one hand the form of punk as a fierce gesture completely separated from bourgeois culture, and on the other hand communism as a horizon of internationalism and radical imagination.**



**The exhibition is a teaser to the forthcoming book of Rab-Rab Press, that will study the complex relationship between communism and punk, the evolution of The Pop Group, the punk slogans as a new form of poetics, punk sensibilities of the left in Finland, and the underground history of anti-war movement in Europe.**

**The exhibition is produced by Lilou Angelrath, Sezgin Boynik and Samu Elmeri Montonen in collaboration with Ott Kagovere and Jan Konsin. Thanks to Mikko Junninen, Timo Kujala, Pia Pursiainen, Jyrki Siukonen, Kalasataman Seripaja, Kansan Arkisto, Yle Arkisto, Kansalliskirjasto and Musiikkiarkisto.**

